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350.

RN,
UGH-STREET.
50,

MRS. ARMYTAGE;

OR,

FEMALE DOMINATION.

BY THE

AUTHORESS OF

"MOTHERS AND DAUGHTERS."

IN THREE VOLUMES.

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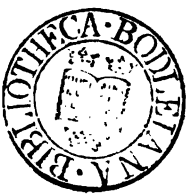

FEMALE DOMINATION.

CHAPTER I.

——— Such a nature,
Tickled with good success, disdains the shadow
Which she treads on at noon.

SHAKSPEARE.

"THE post is late this morning!" said Mrs. Armytage, having finished her second cup of tea, and pushed away a plate disordered with chippings of egg-shell and French roll; while her daughter Sophy, to whom the apostrophe was addressed, aware that her mother measured the proceedings of the world, and the progress of time, by a dial peculiarly her own, did not venture to observe that, as they had sat down to breakfast half an hour earlier

than usual, the newspaper could scarcely arrive in time for its usual office of concluding the ceremonial of the morning meal.

Another moment, and her forbearance was rewarded. Old Simmons, the butler, on making his appearance to remove the urn, placed upon the table, in addition to the two daily papers, two letters from the post-bag; one for his lady, and another, a double one, for Miss Sophia. A double letter, and in her brother Arthur's hand-writing! — What rich repayment for having forborne to tax her mother with being unreasonable!

Mrs. Armytage, of Holywell Park, was one of those parents who, while affecting to encourage in their family all possible freedom of thought and action, exercise over their children the utmost rigour of petty despotism. Deluding herself into a belief that she was the most liberal of mothers, she had been heard to thank heaven, and the late Mr. Armytage, for having left her son and daugh-

ter independent of her, so that no mutual restraint could exist between them; although it was well known that this independence consisted in a provision of a few hundreds a year for each; while *she*, in her own right as an heiress, enjoyed an estate of thrice as many thousands! Even while pretending to sanction the most affectionate mutual confidence between Sophy and her brother, it was remarkable how minutely she contrived to inform herself of all that was said or written between them. Mrs. Armytage was, in short, a woman of arbitrary temper; whose disposition had been cultivated into all the ungraciousness of egotism by the indulgence of an inert and adoring husband.

"What does Arthur say?"—She inquired of her daughter, as soon as Sophy reached the second page of her correspondence.

"Nothing particular, mamma!" replied the young lady, with a deep blush, folding up the letter, though manifestly half unread; and

insinuating it under her waistbelt, as if determined against offering the contents to her mother's participation.

"'Nothing particular' seems to possess a very particular influence over your feelings," persisted mamma, whose temper had been already set on edge by the perusal of her own letter—a missive from her London solicitor, giving an unfavourable account of a lawsuit. "But do not distress yourself; be assured I have no wish to pry into the mysteries conjured up between yourself and Arthur."

"Thank you, mamma. There are no mysteries between us," said Sophy, in a somewhat more decided tone than usual. "But I own I had rather not show you my brother's letter."

"Did I ask you?" cried Mrs. Armytage, apparently bent upon being affronted.

"No,—oh! no!—only I was afraid—"

"Afraid! you would fain make people be-

lieve that I keep my children in desperate awe of me!"

"Indeed I would not, mother," replied Sophy, casting round the room a glance which implied—"We are alone; whom can I be intent upon deceiving?"

"Yes! I understand your meaning!—you would say, now we are *tête-à-tête*, I may triumph in having my own way. There is no one here to notice in how many trivial particulars I can contrive to vex and mortify my mother!"

Sophy was for a moment tempted to appeal to Mrs. Armytage's sense of justice, against this harsh interpretation; but, warned by frequent experience that expostulation was fatal on such occasions, and that it was better to leave her mother to the reaction of a naturally generous mind, she rose from the table, contenting herself with observing, "Arthur desires me to say that he will write to you to-morrow."

"I am much obliged to him!—no doubt he will!"—was the indignant rejoinder of Mrs. Armytage; "as soon as you have settled in what terms I am to be addressed, and what is to be told me, and what concealed between you."

And this hypothesis of the irate lady was unluckily too near the truth, to admit of Sophy's hazarding a word of reply. She accordingly quitted the breakfast-room for her own apartment, in order to bestow her undivided attention upon the communication of her brother.

For Arthur's was indeed no common letter! It was not, as usual, a barren catalogue of names; a list of the persons whose balls he frequented, or whose dinners were hospitably bestowed upon the only son of the rich Mrs. Armytage. There was not a single invective against his commanding officer, nor a murmur against his mother's obstinacy in passing the season in the country.—No! Arthur seemed to

have forgotten *himself*; his whole existence was suddenly merged in that of another; he was in love, avowedly and desperately in love.

That, however, to his sister's knowledge, he had been a thousand times before; but a new feature was now added to his disorder, which caused poor Sophy's hands to tremble as they upheld the letter containing the announcement: Arthur was about to be married!—Without any previous reference to his mother's wishes — without so much as having acquainted her with the name of the object of his attachment—he had actually proposed and been accepted. His hand was irrevocably pledged; and the ominous admeasurement of his Marian's taper finger already under the custody of a fashionable forger of matrimonial fetters.

Such are the destinies of positive people! Mrs. Armytage exercised, in fact, far less influence over the conduct of her children than many a parent, indifferent to the maintenance

of parental prerogative. "If I were to fall in love with an angel, blest with a peerage in her own right, and a million in the five per cents," was Arthur's frequent argument with himself, and occasionally with his sister, "my mother would be sure to raise objections; and I shall therefore evade the sin of disobedience by settling the whole affair without her knowledge. She will be much less likely to refuse her consent, when she knows that resistance is useless!"

Yet, although thus prepared for her brother's proceedings, Sophy regretted that he had been so precipitate. She knew Arthur. She knew that to all his talents, all his excellencies, was united a very moderate degree of sobriety of judgment; and, though she loved him the better for his rash but generous singleness of heart, she felt that these qualities were little calculated to exercise an advantageous influence over his choice of a wife. Her dear Arthur was certain to make

an imprudent marriage! In this one instance, perhaps, the petulance of her mother's opposition might have been beneficial to his prospects.

But it was too late! Arthur Armytage admitted that he was actually engaged,—actually what is called "going to be married." The projects of his settlement in life seemed fully organized. He announced his intention of selling his commission, and hiring a small place in some hunting county,—a farm,—a cottage *orné*,—an Eden surrounded by low fences and green pastures; where he and his Marian might settle down to all the sublunary happiness compassable within a hawthorn-hedge and four hundred and fifty pounds a-year.

A world of intelligence was conveyed to Sophia in this exact specification of income. The amount sufficed to prove that "Marian," instead of being a divinity with the often-named peerage, and the million in the five per

cents, was as unencumbered by worldly pelf as the most disinterested lover could require; and that Arthur had good reason to know his match was not of a nature to open his mother's heart, or her purse-strings. Sophy was sorry! Whatever might be Mrs. Armytage's infirmities of temper, her interest in her children's welfare was warmly maternal; and Sophia felt that ill-advised indeed must be the choice which her brother had set down as hopelessly irreconcileable with her prejudices. When, therefore, she reached, at the end of his second page, an admission that his adored Marian was unenhanced in her attractions by the vulgar recommendations of birth and fortune,—that she was the offspring of a Mr. and Mrs. Baltimore, of Baker-street,—the mother ill-mannered, the father ill-connected,—she could not persuade herself to join in Arthur's self-gratulations, that he should become the means of separating a creature so angelic from a family so thoroughly disagreeable. It appeared that he had been

introduced to Miss Baltimore, at some ball to which she had accompanied a rich West Indian aunt, who was buying her way into society;—that Marian's charms had done much to enslave him, and the advances of her family the rest.

"Mamma always predicted that Arthur would be taken in!" murmured Sophy to herself, when a second time she closed the letter. "And though I feel that he is incapable of bestowing his affections on an unamiable or vulgar-minded girl, I do not half like this hasty match!"

Sophia could not presume to hope that the four hundred and fifty pounds per annum, and the cottage in the hunting county, would gratify the ambition of her mother; for even she, with all the liberality of nineteen and an honest disposition, was of opinion that such a prospect was inadequate to the inherited and personal pretensions of Arthur Armytage, of Holywell.

CHAPTER II.

——— able, if she chose, to please,
Punctual and right in common offices,
She lost all sight of conduct's only worth,—
The scattering smiles on this uneasy earth.

LEIGH HUNT.

NOTWITHSTANDING the prohibition expressed in her brother's postscript—of "Leave *me* to make the disclosure to my mother; I will write to-morrow," which had motived, in the first instance, her reserve with Mrs. Armytage, Sophy, following the impulses of her ingenuous nature, soon longed to reveal the important family secret of which she was the depository. Secrets of her own she had never had to conceal;—it was only with regard to Arthur's indiscretions that she had now and then been compelled to caution; and every thing like mystery was painful to her. She began to fear, too, that Arthur's proceedings were not the

more likely to meet her mother's approbation for having been the cause of four-and-twenty hours' ill-humour.

But Mrs. Armytage, when once seriously thwarted, became impracticable! It was in vain that her daughter strove to lead the way towards the subject weighing on her mind, in hopes she would again evince some inquisitiveness, or perhaps insist on a disclosure. But having readily discerned the compunctious visitings of Sophy's candour, Mrs. Armytage laid aside all curiosity—all interest. She would not be consulted,—she would not be instructed:—without giving utterance to the instigations of her obstinacy, she plainly showed herself determined to know nothing about the matter. She declined her usual morning drive, lest she should find herself *tête-à-tête* with the delinquent; and twice in the course of the day, when Sophy, by what she flattered herself was dexterous management, contrived to introduce her brother's name, Mrs. Armytage replied,

once by reciting the pedigree of a horse she had commissioned her head coachman to purchase at Doncaster; and once by expressing her wonder whether their neighbours, the Wemmersleys, of Mill Hill, had received any further intelligence concerning the arrival of a rich uncle they were expecting from Carolina.

Sophy felt herself defeated. The blood tingled painfully in her soft transparent cheek, when thus out-generalled by her mother. But the more she pondered on the case, the more she became convinced of its urgency; and no sooner had the servant withdrawn after placing dessert upon the table, than she burst out, without further premeditation, into, "Mother, I see you are determined I shall not talk to you about Arthur; but I am *so* eager to consult you, and *so* conscious you ought to be consulted, that"——

"What makes you imagine that I do not choose to talk about Arthur?" inquired Mrs. Armytage, coolly; "on the contrary, I was

talking about him for half an hour this afternoon with the Wemmersleys."

"Have they been here?"

"They called while you were walking in the shrubbery."

"I am sorry I did not see them."

"They would have told *you* nothing with which you were not already acquainted—to *me*, it *was* news; and, certainly, news which I did not expect to hear from strangers—that my only son was going to be married!"

"You knew it then, and would not relieve my mind by conferring with me on the subject," ejaculated Sophy, in dismay; for, of all things, she most apprehended in her mother a cool fit like the present.

"I am aware of nothing to require conference," answered Mrs. Armytage, peeling an almond with the most minute assiduity. "*My* opinion has not been asked; neither my feelings nor my judgment have been consulted; and all I have to desire for *our* sake, if not for

his, is, that Arthur's match may turn out less unfortunate than circumstances induce me to anticipate."

"My dear mother, you alarm me! What have you heard? What did the Wemmersleys know about it? And how came they to be so officious as to talk about the matter?"

"They came here on the neighbourly errand of congratulation."

"So like Mr. Wemmersley! When anything disagreeable occurs in a family, he is so sure to make his appearance with his congratulations!"

"You are not very gracious to your brother, my dear, in terming his marriage 'something disagreeable.' But you can hardly blame Mr. Wemmersley for paying me the respect of wishing me joy on a family event, which, being so far public as to have been communicated to him in a letter from town, he had no reason to suppose was still a secret from the mother of Arthur Armytage."

"And what did he tell you of these Baltimores?"

"Not much. When he found me totally ignorant of the affair (indeed, but for the mysterious face you assumed in reading your letter this morning, I should have been inclined to deny the whole as an idle rumour), he seemed to think it might be unfair to my son to forestall his own communication."

"And thus, by implication, managed to create a suspicion in your mind that—"

"He implied *nothing!*" hastily interrupted Mrs. Armytage: "he owned frankly and fairly, the match was considered so *very* brilliant a one for the young lady, that he feared it would scarcely turn out a satisfactory one for my son."

"How does he know?"

"In the way most things are known in this world: through the bad habit in which we indulge of gossiping about the affairs of our neighbours. Arthur Armytage of the Life

Guards—the dashing, laughing, flirting Arthur Armytage, the supposed heir to Holywell and fifteen thousand a year,—is a person of sufficient importance to have his follies discussed in society; till, at last, his imprudent marriage comes to form a paragraph in a London letter to a country correspondent. Shall we go into the drawing-room?"

"But Mr. Wemmersley had heard no positive *harm* of the Baltimores?" persisted Sophia, rising to follow her mother.

"I fancy they are obscure people, of whom no one is likely to have heard either good *or* harm," said Mrs. Armytage, taking her place beside the drawing-room work-table. "And now, my dear Sophia, as we shall certainly hear enough of them in the course of the next six months, oblige me by dismissing the subject."

"You will not read Arthur's letter?" faltered Sophy.

"You know I never read writing by candle-light."

"Will you give me leave to read it to you, my dear mother?"

"No! my dear; keep your brother's secrets—keep your own. When his interests are to be served by the disclosure, no doubt my son will communicate with me on the subject of the step he has taken."

"Oh! no, mother, you cannot accuse Arthur of being *interested!*—of *that* failing, at least, he is altogether guiltless."

"Like most people whose wishes and whims have been forestalled through life. We have yet to learn what impulse his character will receive from his connexion with such people as the Baltimores."

"Such people! I am convinced you know more about them than you like to tell me."

"I know nothing—absolutely nothing; except that (without having met with reverses in life), they are people of very small fortune; and a man with a large family, who remains

peor at fifty years of age, must be wanting in intelligence, activity, connexion, or probity."

Sophy, who could not always follow her mother's line of reasoning, contented herself with answering in a dispirited voice,—"Let us hope that Mr. Baltimore may be wanting in the first. Distress, at least, need not entail an hereditary stigma."

"His daughter has certainly displayed no want of intelligence in ensnaring a young man of Arthur's prospects," said Mrs. Armytage, her cool fit giving way to rising choler. "A girl without name—without a shilling—without—"

"Dearest mother, let us—as you proposed just now—defer the discussion till we hear what Arthur has to say for himself."

"You have read what he has chosen to write for himself; yet you have not a single argument to offer in favour of the match!"

"I am persuaded my brother is incapable of allying himself unworthily."

"I am equally sure that no one is more likely to be deceived as to the worth of those with whom he comes in collision. Arthur was born to be a dupe! and instead of fortifying his judgment by taking counsel with those who have more worldly wisdom than himself—"

"Ah! mother!—*Who* takes council in matters of love? Arthur seems to have made his proposals before he knew what he was about."

"*That* was a rash measure!" answered Mrs. Armytage, taking up a book; a well-known signal to her daughter that she wished to put an end to the conversation. "I suspect he knows what he has been about, by this time."

And thus silenced, poor Sophy had only to betake herself for consolation to her worsted-work for the remainder of the evening, surrounding her roses and pansies with sky-blue leaves, while she pondered and pondered upon the state of family affairs. She saw that her mother was irritated; and hoped she would sleep off her sense of vexation. Mrs. Armytage

was a lover of early hours and family order; and being left to herself, would probably perceive the wisdom of making the best of a bad business.

But Arthur seemed intent on ruining his own cause. At two o'clock in the morning, three hours after the family had retired to rest, the dogs began to bark violently in the quiet courtyard. The house-bell rung, the office-doors slammed, scuffling feet were heard in the hall; and, at length, Mrs. Armytage having rung up her own maid to ascertain the cause of so unusual a disturbance, had the dissatisfaction of learning that "the Captain was come down from town, in a chaise and four."

Unluckily, too, the maid was an ancient and most rheumatic spinster; who, much inclined to resent being called out of her warm bed in the middle of the night, for the first time since the birth of Miss Sophia, thought proper to add that "Everything was at sixes and sevens; that Miss Sophy was up, and supping with her

brother in the dining-room; and the whole house turned topsy-turvy."

Mrs. Armytage immediately fancied she could discern from the hall the asthmatic cough of her venerable butler, and felt that the peace of her "regular" establishment was scandalously invaded. Captain Armytage evidently considered himself privileged to take all possible liberties in her house. After waking up the servants by arriving at such a preposterous hour, why not at least retire to rest, and let other people rest, without creating further inconvenience?

Mrs. Armytage was just then as little inclined to admit the necessity of a sandwich and a glass of sherry, after a hurried journey of a hundred and ninety-four miles, as the irresistibility of Miss Marian Baltimore, with all her sweetness, beauty, and accomplishments. Even sleep did not subdue the peremptory lady's exasperation against her son.

CHAPTER III.

My blood hath been too cold and temperate,
Unapt to stir at these indignities,
And you have found me; for accordingly
You tread upon my patience.

SHAKSPEARE.

IT was Arthur Armytage's misfortune that the London letter-bag arrived at Holywell at so early an hour as eight of the clock; it was his *fault* that he selected a moment equally matinal for his conference with his mother. Before her displeasure of the night had been soothed down by a single cup of mild, balmy, benignant, sorrow and choler-soothing Bohea, he chose to make his way into her dressing-room, and unburthen himself of his secret. Poor fellow! He had been made such an idol by the whole tribe of Baltimore during his recent courtship,

that he was unprepared to fancy he could be in the wrong elsewhere.

But he was fated to be roughly undeceived. Sophia, who with a beating heart saw her mother and brother descend into the breakfast-room together, and take their seats at the table, perceived in a moment, from a certain compression of her mother's lips, and from the brilliant crimson peeping through the tangled masses of Arthur's rich brown hair, just where his small, well-turned ear was partially visible, that both were labouring under the effects of suppressed passion. She was too well acquainted with Arthur's rightness of mind to apprehend for a moment that he had forgotten himself towards his mother; but she did fear, tremblingly, tearfully, that Mrs. Armytage had been seized with one of her fits of implacability, and thrown down the gauntlet to her son. What was to be done; and how was peace to be restored between them?

By nature petulant, the character of Mrs.

Armytage, of Holywell, had been rendered arbitrary by circumstances. The only daughter of a wealthy, high-principled, high-tempered English squire, (whose sister had been reduced to beggary by a spendthrift husband, and, as he insisted, chiefly on account of her own ignorance and carelessness of business) Caroline Maudsley had been brought up by her father, precisely as he was bringing up Charles, whose premature death left her heiress to the fine estate of Holywell. She was taught to ride, to run, to settle with the steward and housekeeper, to parley with the farmers, to dispute with the tax-gatherers. A little Latin, and a great deal of arithmetic, bounded her accomplishments. Of music she knew nothing, except as an art whose professors might be hired for her entertainment; or of dancing, except as an exercise far less invigorating than a gallop on the wolds. Law and theology, Blackstone and Tillotson, were the studies inculcated by her preceptor, the curate of the parish; and

it was perhaps attributable to the surprise with which the good old man found himself suddenly transformed into the pedagogue of a beautiful girl of fifteen, that his spiritual pastorship was so insufficiently exercised in curbing the peremptoriness of her disposition. He discerned in the mind of his pupil a fund of sound and sober sense; and doubted not that it would in time avail to reform her faults of character. But, alas! there is no point on which the re-action of the mind operates so slowly and imperfectly as on the infirmities of a wilful temper.

Caroline Maudsley, therefore, grew to woman's estate, and was still positive, still ungovernable; yet neither squire nor curate could detect a fault in her. It had been the long-planned project of her father to unite his beautiful heiress with the head of another branch of his family, Sir John Maudsley, of Maudsley Hall; but at nineteen, Caroline announced a decided preference for the son of

her father's old schoolfellow, Arthur Armytage, a less dignified, but more attractive suitor; and the old gentleman, according to his custom, eventually submitted to her will. Nay, he soon began to participate in his daughter's affection for his estimable son-in-law; and it was generally considered, that nothing but old Maudsley's sudden death a few years after their marriage, had prevented the re-modification of a will by which he left the whole of his property at the separate and absolute disposal of his daughter. Willingly would Mrs. Armytage have resigned her authority to her husband, for she was of a generous disposition, not yet confirmed into the love of sway; but Armytage would not hear of it. The estate could not be better than in her hands; for even his own small property of a thousand a year gave him more trouble in the management than suited his reckless habits. He devoted himself, accordingly, to hunting, fishing, shooting, eating, and drinking, without much

care for the estate or the morrow; and died on the field—not of glory, but of fox-hunting—killed by a fall from his horse, at the early age of eight-and-twenty! And thus, his young widow became sole arbitress of the destinies of his children: a very trifling accession to the authority she had exercised as his wife.

Caroline never married again: perhaps, because she honoured the memory of so subservient a husband; perhaps, because she fancied that no other human being would be content to eclipse himself in the shadow of her talents and her virtues. *She* fancied that the sacrifice (for she had many and advantageous suitors) was made to the interests of her children—and to do her justice, she *was* a prudent and affectionate mother—while their tender years admitted not the apprehension of their opposition to her autocracy at Holywell.

Nothing could be happier than the union of the *little* family, so long as the arbitrary tendencies of Mrs. Armytage's temper were re-

stricted to the management and legislation of her dependants and country neighbours, a task, indeed, which afforded her ample employment. From the period of her husband's untimely end, she had never suffered the hounds to traverse her territories; and this prohibition in a sporting county, and from the daughter and widow of sportsmen, involved her in endless disputes. Electioneering, too, brought its squabbles; and Mrs. Armytage, who knew that the Holywell rents had never been raised during the agrarian extortions of the trumpeting time of war, had no idea of lowering them, after the example of her less liberal neighbours, during the piping times of peace. In short, she had a will of her own in the county; and, in a county so wide and so various in its interests as Yorkshire, it is much easier to *have* a will and to maintain it, than in such provinces as Herts or Hunts, where every public opinion is traceable to the influence of Hatfield or Hinchinbrooke.

The Lady of Holywell, whose throne was fixed in her own domain from Christmas to Midsummer, as well as from Midsummer to Christmas, and who was consequently exempt from the fashion-hunting meanness of party-giving, or going, manœuvres, was perhaps, somewhat too sturdy in her sense of independence. Disgusted by the servility she observed in the Wemmersleys of Mill Hill, and others of her country neighbours, she prided herself on keeping up a surly sense of dignity with her neighbour Lord Rotherham, merely because he was an Earl! There might, perhaps, have been virtue in her ungraciousness towards the noble inhabitants of Greta Castle, had Lord and Lady Rotherham affected the transcendent self-exaltation exhibited by the family of the Duke of Spalding, resident at the other side of the county. But Lord Rotherham was the simplest-hearted and most straightforward of men; while his lady knew nothing, and cared for nothing, but the re-

gistry of the ages, misery, and ailments of her ten children: so that the majesty of Mrs. Armytage's *hauteur* was completely thrown away.

But for some time past her manners, if not her feelings, had considerably thawed towards the family. Her son, at Eton and Oxford, was the chosen friend of young Lord Greta; Lady Laura, the only one of the girls grown up, was not to be repulsed in her attachment to Sophy Armytage, and in the end, the Lady of Holywell found it impossible to keep up the defensive barriers of coldness and reserve she had erected against the advances of her noble neighbours.

Besides, her authority had already ample exercise in restraining the turbulence of her son. Arthur was now grown into a fine young man, with a head and heart glowing with impetuosity; and a struggle for mastery soon arose between them. Mrs. Armytage, among her masculine propensities, cherished a strong, sturdy, wholesome ambition. She felt that her

son, in his heirship to fifteen thousand a-year, possessed a stake in the country, entitling him to pretend to a place in its representation; and, in order to add the qualifications of mind to those of body and estate, it was her desire that, on leaving College, he should address himself to the study of the law. But Arthur was inflexible: he was willing enough to promise to "come forward," at some future time, for the neighbouring borough of Thoroton, for he thought "franking letters would be devilish good fun, and had a project of his own about farming the mail-roads, which he should thus have an opportunity of bringing before Parliament." But as to studying in the Temple —he, Arthur Armytage—the gayest man of Ch. Ch.,—the man whose bills with Milton, Hudson, and Baron Stulz, might, on attaining his majority, have added a farm to his estate —the thing was preposterous! His cronies, Dumbarton and Lord Edward Brereton, were gone into the Life-Guards, and into the Life-

Guards he must go!—Of age, and competent in fortune, there was no resisting this determination; and Mrs. Armytage, unenlightened by London-seasoning, touching the habits and recommendations of His Majesty's Household Brigade, and measuring the pretensions of the gallant corps in which her son had written himself down a Cornet, by those of certain regiments of the line, quartered aforetime in her neighbourhood, could by no means reconcile herself to his outburst of heroism. She hated the notion of a son of hers galloping after the King's coach, or wasting his days lounging out of a window in Whitehall; and Arthur, whose limited fortune was already impaired, saw that there was not the slightest chance of the enlargement of his means by any concession from his mother's liberality. She purchased for herself a new set of bays on the day of his presentation at Court; but vouchsafed not to add so much as a charger to his outfit—braving the imputation of parsimony

for the satisfaction of marking her displeasure.

And now, after thwarting her in the choice of a profession, this only son was about to thwart her in the choice of a wife! He, to whom she had so often expressed her disapproval of early marriages, was about to throw himself away on a girl without fortune, without family—or rather, *with* a family! But there was no use in discussing the subject: Arthur had proposed, been accepted, and admitted his engagements to his mother. All he had now to do was to sit in patient humility, and watch her working her deliberate way through her breakfast, with a degree of gravity becoming a Chancellor of the Exchequer in the examination of his Treasury accounts; and then, back to London—back to Baker-Street—back to Marian, with what appetite he might!

Poor Sophy, meanwhile, trembling with anxiety to learn the issue of his private conference

with her mother, kept mistaking tea for coffee and coffee for tea, in her presidency over the duties of the table; auguring ill from the obstinate silence of Mrs. Armytage, yet dreading to hear the sound of her voice. Scarcely a word passed between them during the continuance of the meal. It was not till Simmons and the newspapers arrived, and his mistress received from his hand no fewer than five letters,—all of which, as Arthur rightly conjectured, bore reference, remote or proximate, to his marriage,—that she rose in all the rustling dignity of her *gros-de-Naples*, and indignation, to quit the apartment.

"I conclude you will immediately return to London?" said she to Capt. Armytage, as she reached the door. "As you are of age and independent, I fancy my signature will be needless in your marriage settlements. If I am mistaken, let me hear from Messrs. Pennett and Nibwell. Hardywood is waiting for me in the study, so that I shall not see you again before you quit the house. Good morning."

"Good morning, **mother!**"—*answered* her son, in as pacific a **voice as he could** command; —but feeling deeply,—**bitterly**,—*that the* kindness and watchfulness **of four-and-twenty years** were already obliterated **from his** mind by the display of such repellent **reserve** at so eventful a moment of his existence.

Had it not been for **the soothing** influence of *his* good and gentle **sister, he might**, perhaps, have been tempted to **indulge** in expressions of resentment, only **more fatally** injurious to his future prospects. **But Sophy** implored him to *forbear; and* **who could** resist the mild persuasive voice of **Sophy Armytage**?

CHAPTER IV.

Jack Falstaff with my familiars; John with my brothers and sisters.

SHAKSPEARE.

In the present frame of European society, virtue and vice are no longer "ultimate facts;" there are virtues and vices for every station and degree. For an Honourable John Percy, for instance, to be called "Jack Percy," implies the currency of good fellowship in the world of fashion; but for a Mister Baltimore, of Baker-street, to be called "Jack Baltimore," infers decided disorderliness of morals or finances. Such a Jack must needs be a man cunning in the odds, expert at billiards, addicted to punch, knowing in horseflesh, the very Samuel Johnson of the slang dictionary: and unfortunately, the father of Arthur Armytage's Marian was commonly called "Jack"

—a Jack with a small and decreasing income, and a large and increasing family!

Mrs. Baltimore, though not in her turn called Jill, was scarcely a more eligible connexion than her husband. Well born, but endowed only with a very pretty face, she had eloped in a tandem, at sixteen; expecting to live with her dear Baltimore the same dressy, noisy, mail-driving, racketing life, she had seen him living at the watering-place where their ill-starred acquaintance originated. But Jack, disappointed in his notion of having married an Irish heiress, wisely judged that bachelor pleasures are by no means calculated for conjugal participation. He did not choose that there should be a *Mrs.* Jack; and Mrs. Baltimore, accordingly, being totally deficient in the qualifications which inspire a woman

"Well-order'd home man's best delight to make,"

became a dawdle and a slattern. Finery she could *not* renounce; but poverty willed that it should be faded and shabby finery;—and

ringlets and rouge combined with soiled satins and rumpled linen, to endow her with an air, the last a well-thinking woman would wittingly incur.

Still, with all her offences to the eye, there was something not wholly despicable in Mrs. Baltimore. She was a doating mother to the ten children, whose necessities encroached so largely on her luxuries; and much as she loved a smart cap or showy gown, willingly resigned all, to afford a good tilbury and a fine horse to her dear Jack, whom *she* alone, by the way, of all the world, called Baltimore!

The society of such a house, as may easily be conjectured, was any thing but select. A few young noblemen in their nonage were occasionally to be seen at Jack Baltimore's, who, on attaining their majority, were heard of there no more;—but for the most part, the circle was composed of "coaching," smoking, fancy sort of men,—each with his terrier or his bull

dog familiarly at his heels;—each having his good song, or his good story, appropriately his own;—each the best fellow in the world, and each incessantly involved in squabbles with the fellow-creatures his inferiors. Fortunately for Mrs. Baltimore, strong conjugal and motherly affections had preserved her in morals and reputation free from blemish, amidst such injurious associations; but they had not tended to improve her manners or refine her mind. All these best fellows in the world were heartily welcome to her house. They evinced no disgust towards her slipshod habits;—were ever ready to lend their sticks or whips to her seven little boys, and to swear by George or the Lord Harry, that her baby was the most promising puppy of the kennel!

We have described Mrs. Baltimore's better propensities; her ruling foible was an ardent aspiration after fashion. She knew that, as the wife of a sporting man, and still more as the mother of his large family, she could not pre-

tend to much enjoyment of the pomps and vanities of the world. Still, she could not refrain from bending a wistful eye upon the ball-describing details of the Morning Post, or the flashy *vis-à-vis* that rolled along beneath her windows; although without exactly wishing that heaven had made her Baltimore such another man as the yellow nabob whose hoards were the origin of that gaudy hammer-cloth; or of those banquets with their plateaux of gold. It was, therefore, a great delight to her when her sister, Mrs. Dyke Robsey, who, instead of marrying a Jack, had married a Jacob, came to settle in a handsome house in Portland Place, on occasion of her husband's taking his seat in Parliament; for although Jack Baltimore expressed an opinion that a man who, with ten thousand a year drove job horses, and had his carriages turned out by a bargain-builder in the borough, "was not worth his salt," Mrs. B. saw in her sister's opera-box, equipages, and gorgeous establish-

ment, an endless source of pride and pleasure to the family.

Let us do her justice!—it was *not* of herself she thought, but of her pretty Marian—her promising Marian, who was now leaving the school at which it had cost her mother so many personal sacrifices to place her; and as Mrs. Dyke Robsey was almost as good-natured a woman as her more prolific sister, it was soon settled among them that, instead of taking possession of the attic destined to her use in Baker-street, Miss Baltimore, however humbly brought up by her parents, should be "brought out" by her aunt with all the advantages derivable from ostentatious, vulgar, bustling, fussy wealth. Jack, who had sense enough to feel that among *his* companions there was no one he should like to see entangle the affections of his daughter, sanctioned Marian's translation, with a half-grumbling adjuration that "Much good might it do her!"—and

Mrs. Baltimore, when perusing in the morning papers the name of "Mrs. Dyke Robsey, and Miss Baltimore," in the list of the company at the Opera, or at some charity-ball at Willis's, felt herself amply repaid for the sacrifice of her dear girl's aid in making frocks for the children; or her dear girl's company throughout those long evenings, which the "good fellowship" of Jack so often rendered solitary.

Meanwhile, Mrs. Dyke Robsey was never weary of asserting that Marian's beauty produced the greatest sensation, and that she would certainly make a very brilliant match. The first season, however, passed away without any such consummation; for Marian was generously permitted by her father to refuse the offer of a man of some hundreds of thousands; a little old-fashioned creole kinsman of her uncle's, who wore nankin shorts, and looked like some curious shrivelled reptile, imported in spirits from the Caribbees. But

she was only nineteen; and "Marian is sure to make a good match!" was still often and sanguinely repeated,—even in Marian's presence.

She, at least, was unsolicitous on the subject. The good match, so frequently predicted, was chiefly an object of ambition, because she saw that the hearts of her fond mother and kind aunt were set upon her triumph; while her father had more than once assured her that, were she to marry "well," it might be the making of her brothers and sisters. All that might be included in that one word "well," Marian could not at first determine. From the moment she became acquainted with Arthur Arnytage, her notions of "marrying well" became fixed as fate. She now perfectly understood the meaning of the term! To marry "well" was to marry a captain in the Life-guards, of ancient family, heir to a fine property in Yorkshire;—gay as herself, candid as herself, and if less fortunate in the tender-

heartedness of a mother, Miss Baltimore at present knew nothing of the deficiency.—From the first time he sought her as a partner,—(and Marian had lain awake the remainder of the night, pondering over every word addressed to her by the young soldier in the course of the memorable quadrille)—her fate was sealed. She felt that her future happiness must depend on becoming the wife of one who was at once so gentle and so sprightly, so refined yet so *un-fine*; and as Arthur was equally prompt in pinning his trust upon the purity of nature which, in spite of two seasons in town and the chaperonage of a Mrs. Dyke Robsey, sent the blushes so warmly into his partner's cheek, whenever he hazarded a compliment somewhat tenderer than the routine of ball-room common-place—she was not long kept in suspense. The Robseys, fully appreciating the advantages of such an alliance for their protégée, invited him to Portland Place, gave him the best of

dinners, and the *élite* of their muscovado "fashionables" as his fellow guests; and Arthur, still more and more enchanted by the beautiful girl who was undisguisedly still more and more enchanted by his homage, evinced the most praiseworthy deference for the aunt in her gold-tissue turban, and silver-tissue gown; no less than for the little diminutive, wheezy Mr. Dyke Robsey, who, having been wrapped in cotton during the first six months of his life, had for the remaining sixty years been swathed in furlongs of fleecy hosiery, to render his attenuated frame tolerably equal in volume to the average of the human race; and who with a "*petit filet de voix*," which had never attained sufficient vigour to frighten a canary-bird, had considered it a duty due to his thousands a-year to buy his way into parliament.

Having constantly seen Miss Baltimore domiciliated with these weak but worthy people, Arthur flattered himself she was an orphan.

He liked the thoughts of marrying an orphan, —an orphan without brothers or sisters; who would have no one but himself to love, and who *would* love him so dearly; who would find a parent in his mother, and a sister in Sophy; and it was a great disappointment, on making his proposal to the nineteenth part of a man which called itself Jacob Dyke Robsey, Esq., M.P., for the hand of his niece, to be referred to Mr. and Mrs. Baltimore, of Baker-Street, and to be introduced to the nine little Baltimores. Jack, in his single-breasted coat,—Jack, so well known at Tattersall's,—Jack, with a heavy book for the Derby,—Jack, who, with a gripe of the hand and a slap upon the shoulder, told him he was a devilish fine young fellow, and heartily welcome to his daughter—struck him with consternation; for now, for the first time, he reflected on the fastidiousness of his mother! The picture of proud, well-built, well-ordered, airy Holywell, rose like an exhalation before his mind's eye, as he sat in the

littered drawing-room in Baker Street, full of children and bird-cages; with Mrs. Baltimore, attired in all her tawdry best, and excited by the joy of the moment into a flightiness of speech which he was not skilled to trace to its true origin. Never did he so warmly wish that his lovely Marian had been an orphan!

It was on that day he wrote to his sister. It was in the course of that evening that Jack, who accounted a rattle in a well-horsed mail or post-chaise among the recreations of life, strongly advised his son-in-law elect to get the start of rumour, and make the best of his way to Holywell. Knowing Mrs. Armytage by report only, as having warned off the hounds from her estates, he settled it that she must be a "queer one;" and succeeded in starting Arthur on the Great North Road, to smooth down her queerness by telling his own story. At one moment, he even talked of bearing his future son-in-law company in the expedition;

but this, young Armytage was obliged to negative as hazardous to its success.

"I knew that girl would be the making of the family, God bless her!" cried Jack to his wife, giving his hearty benediction to Marian on her return to Portland Place, after the departure of her lover. "I like the chap she has picked up prodigiously. I went with him to his stables, this afternoon; and a cleverer thing than that bay pony of his I never set eyes on."

"He seems very good-tempered," replied Mrs. Baltimore.

"The pony?"

"No! Captain Armytage. He has promised to take Harry and Billy to the Opera, as soon as he returns from Yorkshire."

"Better take them to Astley's; there is some sense in that! I don't much like what I hear of the old mother. Tom Warley was hunting down in that country last season, and *he* tells me she is a devil of a Tartar!"

"I trust she won't be unkind to dear Marian. There is no occasion for the young people to live with her."

"The question is what she will give 'em to live on elsewhere. They can't do with less than two thousand a-year. Armytage won't hear of remaining in the army; and as I've been telling him since dinner, the best thing he can do is to settle in a snug box, somewhere where the sporting's good and come-at-able; and with a good horse or two in his stable, a good bottle of wine in his cellar, and a spare bed for a friend, he will be the happiest fellow in the world! And, then, when the old lady drops,—there he is, plump into a splendid property! But, as I said to him to-*night, if* they should happen to fall out in the *mean time*, there will be no chance of the *estate falling in*. Ha! ha! ha!"

"*But why should* they fall out?" eagerly inquired Mrs. Baltimore, more interested in

her daughter's happiness than her husband's jocularity.

"Oh! I don't know! If the dowager's so stuck up as they say, she mayn't think it a good match for her son."

"A good match, indeed!"

"Why you see, my dear, I've told this young chap, as I've told 'em all, whoever marries Marian must take her in ——"

"Hush! my dear Baltimore! You *do* use such expressions. But as the Captain is so rich, he don't want fortune in a wife; and as to merit and cleverness, where will he find Marian's equal? Such a daughter,—such a sister; and *did* you hear her sing the 'Light Guitar,' this evening? It was equal to Miss Inverarity! And then for family ——"

"*My* father was one of the first clothiers in Gloucestershire, and your's was an Irish Baronet; I don't know what the old lady can reasonably wish for more. And yet ——"

"Well, well!" ejaculated Mrs. Baltimore, puffing out the supernumerary lights which had graced the drawing-room in honour of the illustrious courtship in the family, "let the old lady only *see* Marian, and there will be an end of her opposition! Moving in the first circles, as the girl has been doing along with the Robseys, it is hard if she is not fit company for the widow of a Yorkshire 'squire."

"I would advise the widow of the Yorkshire 'squire to find her so," retorted the angry father, "or I may perhaps be tempted to make her better acquainted with the name and nature of Jack Baltimore."

CHAPTER V.

I'll be thine, my fair,
Or not my mother's. To this I am most constant,
Though destiny say, No!—

SHAKSPEARE.

SUCH were the expectations which it became Arthur's ungracious office to undeceive, on his return from Holywell. Of course he made the best of his story, but it was a hard story to make the best of. "His mother did not *interdict* his marriage; his mother entertained no prejudice against the Baltimore family, for she had never heard of them till on occasion of his attachment. But she did not approve of his marrying so young—she did not approve of his quitting the army—she would do nothing to promote the match."

"Will *give* nothing, you mean?" interrogated Jack, coming to the point.

"I fear not."

"And you have of your own ——"

"Not five hundred a-year" (which, being interpreted, meant little more than four); "but we might live very happily on five hundred a-year," added Armytage, gaining courage from the silence of the parents.

"*We* had not so much, when *we* settled in life," sighed Mrs. Baltimore, arranging her gilt bracelets.

"Times were different then;—and we had no situation in life to keep up."

"There is no personal sacrifice I would not make," observed Armytage, turning a deaf ear to the latter explanation, "in order to secure Marian's comfort."

"And Marian is the least expensive creature in the world!—She never wants anything," cried Mrs. Baltimore; forgetting that *her* daughter's wants had been hitherto forestalled by the liberality of the Robseys.

"Well, we must see about it; there will be

no harm in waiting!" said Jack, not a little damped in his ardour for the match by this change of stakes.

"*Waiting?*" interrupted Armytage, who saw the utmost harm in leaving his precious Marian in the society of her own family. "Pray do not talk of waiting!"

"I am sure a long engagement would break poor Marian's heart," added the mother, with perfect simplicity.—"She is such a nervous, susceptible creature!"

"My mother cannot but come round," interposed Arthur; "I am an only son; and when once she knows that the marriage is irremediable, she will do all that is right and handsome."

"Old women are so deuced obstinate!" cried Jack; "'tis like pulling at a hard-mouthed colt."

"If, therefore," resumed Arthur, colouring deeply at the latter observation, so much at variance with the reverence he was in the

habit of testifying towards his mother—"if you will but give your consent, the sooner we are married the better. Time will bring all things straight."

The axiom was one of established authority; but before he ventured on a definitive answer, Jack had two or three Toms, Dicks, and Bobs, whom he chose to consult about marrying his daughter, as he would have done about selling his horse. But Tom, Dick, and Bob, remembering how many fillies friend Jack had still at grass, were strongly in favour of the alliance. The Robseys were next referred to; and Mrs. Dyke, who had set her heart upon giving a "déjeûner *à la fourchette*," as the newspapers politely call a luncheon, to the happy pair at her splendid mansion in Portland Place, would not hear of a postponement. Nay, finding the great lady of Holywell so remiss, the Robseys even ventured on the presentation of a hundred per annum to their niece, which they would have scarcely thought

worth offering, had Mrs Armytage done justice to her son: Mrs. Dyke Robsey superadded the gift of a handsome set of topazes to the bride, purchased on the very day of Arthur's proposals; while Mr. Dyke Robsey promised a new carriage to the young couple, a promise which tended to accelerate their union,—for Jack immediately set off for Longacre, to give orders, and superintend the building of a "capital charott."

In short the thing was to be!—Arthur, dreading to encounter the mess-raillery of his brother officers, accepted the first terms offered for his commission; the proceeds of which formed a handsome addition to his fortune; and when, after a considerable expenditure of arithmetic, and fifty pounds-worth of conference with the lawyers, it was ascertained that Mr. and Mrs. Arthur Armytage would begin the world with an income of six hundred and twenty pounds a-year, Mrs. Baltimore observed with a sigh, that so long as

they had no family, they might do wonderfully well.

Arthur did not think it necessary to inform them that it was his own fault the six did not amount to eight; that his excellent sister had remitted a deed making over to him two hundred a year of her own fortune; with an earnest assurance that, as all her wants and wishes were amply provided for by her mother, his acceptance would only prevent her from becoming a hoarder. But Arthur knew, or suspected, to what object his sister's hoardings were dedicated; and would as soon have thought of robbing a church as of profiting by her disinterestedness. Besides, he had still full faith in his mother. He wrote to her firmly, but respectfully, to announce the completion of the arrangements for his marriage. He was too proud to implore her sanction, fearing the prayer might be interpreted into an appeal to her generosity; and as she remained silent, and as Sophy gave him little

encouragement to hope for any immediate concession in his favour, the ceremony was performed; Mr. and Mrs. Dyke Robsey's raised pies and decorated hams were duly eaten and commended, and the bride and bridegroom despatched upon a tour to the continent. If it had not been that Jack Baltimore (seeing double from the effects of his brother-in-law's Champagne, and leaning over the balcony to ascertain what sort of a turn-out did honour to the Acre and to his inventive genius)—predicted that the off-leader of the four posters would prove a bolter, there was no fault to be found with the wedding.

Meanwhile, Sophy Armytage's position was far from being of an enviable nature. During those six weeks of suspense, although her mother knew her to be in almost daily communication with Arthur, not a word was uttered by Mrs. Armytage expressive of interest or curiosity in his measures. From that unlucky morning, when Sophia, unwisely following her

brother's directions, had kept secret the subject of his momentous epistle, their mother had scrupulously refrained from interference in their correspondence. She had expressed her opinion concerning his projected marriage, forcibly and unreservedly. It had remained for him to decide between following her advice, or his own rash inclinations; and the result had demonstrated the extent of his filial duty and affection. Fifty times a day did Mrs. Armytage remind herself that since his passion for Miss Baltimpre had obtained the ascendency, it was not for a woman of her principles to sanction so flagrant an example of family insubordination.

But much as she laboured to maintain her ordinary aspect and demeanour, Sophy could not but notice that her mother's feelings were powerfully excited. Mrs. Armytage's fine commanding countenance, indeed, remained unruffled. She came and went as usual;—busied herself with the affairs of the country

and the county, the parish, the farm, the household;—but there was irritability in all her gestures, restlessness in all her proceedings. She accepted engagements in the neighbourhood, gave dinners and received them;—but Sophy was grieved to observe the incoherence which absence of mind tended to impart to her discourse, usually so luminous with sense and meaning. People might now contradict her as they pleased,—she had no spirit for argument. Even when Mr. Wemmersley vented his covert sneers upon the agricultural system adopted at her pet farm, she bore his taunts,—she bore his blunders;—she suffered ignorance itself to be a plummet over her!

As a climax to Sophia's sorrows, she began to fancy that her mother's health was giving way under the susceptibility of her temper. The countenance of Mrs. Armytage frequently bore evidence at breakfast that she had not closed her eyes through the night. She was at once feverish and languid; *she* who had never

in her life experienced a head-ache, or consulted a physician! It is true, she still protested she was well,—never better;—and expressed such vehement displeasure when Sophy hinted at the propriety of consulting the apothecary, that a stranger might have been deceived concerning the extent of her ailments. But the eye of an affectionate daughter is not so easily blinded. Following the indications of her own noble and womanly nature, Sophy fancied that her mother might be repenting her severity, and that she needed only a pretext for displaying milder dispositions towards her son. But having hazarded a few words expressive of Arthur's uneasiness on her account, and the desire of all their friends that a reconciliation might take place, Mrs. Armytage replied with so much sternness that "There could be no reconciliation where there had been no estrangement;—that she was not in the habit of exposing her family affairs to the suffrage of her acquaintance," and added in so decisive a tone—"If you

wish that things should go on well between us, Sophy, evince for the future your sense of duty by refraining from all allusion to this forbidden subject!"—that Miss Armytage admitted the impossibility of any further attempt.

Sophy had the vexation, too, of suspecting that every one was in combination against her brother. The Holywell servants, for instance, were of a class only to be met with in opulent provincial families, who do not indulge in yearly migration to London.—As much a part of the house as the turret-clock of the offices, —weatherworn in body and moss-grown in faculties, like the very walls of the ancient mansion. Most of them were servitors of the parents of Mrs. Armytage,—had seen *her* born as well as her children; and looked up to her with a veneration somewhat similar to that lavished by the Russian nation on their mother, their beloved "*matouschka*," Imperial Catherine. That a child of the house, a son, an heir,

should have ventured on such a step as marriage, in direct contradiction to her will, appeared to *them* flat blasphemy; and the old deaf housekeeper, the old blind steward, the old lame lady's maid, the old asthmatic cook, the old drunken coachman, the old toothless housemaid, protested, in unanimous chorus, against his filial ingratitude! Master Arthur was unpardonable; the steward's room passed an unhesitating vote of censure upon his conduct!

At that critical juncture, the business of the stables, or, perhaps, business of his own devising, took the drunken head coachman to Doncaster; and *who* better known at Doncaster than Jack Baltimore—and what more urgent on the landlord of the Flying Childers, himself an out-pensioned dependant of the Holywell family, than to apostrophize John Coachman with a Jeremiad over the decadence of *their* master's house? All that Jack had *ever* done or left undone—all his dishonoured bills—all his bets disputed—all that is inva-

riably said or insinuated against a man not rich enough to buy the favour of the rabble—not powerful enough to silence their slanders, or virtuous enough to defy them—was said and insinuated against Arthur's father-in-law; and the list of delinquencies strangely jumbled together and fermented by the process of a twenty miles' jog homewards after the absorption of little less than a gallon of strong October, produced a family portrait of a hero, within a crime or two of deserving the canonization of the Newgate Calendar!

The sketch was soon unfolded by this double-sighted youth of sixty-four to the toothless housemaid, by the toothless housemaid to the asthmatic cook, by the asthmatic cook to the lame lady's maid, and by the lame lady's maid to the deaf housekeeper; who, by virtue of her infirmity, was privileged to add a few shades of turpitude to Jack Baltimore's vices, ere she laid the sum total before the recognition of the blind steward, the only

menial of the household admitted to the honour of gossiping with his lady; for *he* was the contemporary of 'Squire Maudsley. Old Hardywood's grey hairs were sacred in her eyes as the monument of her father; and when, with tears rolling down his furrowed cheeks, he confided to his beloved mistress that the next Mrs. Armytage of Holywell would have a scamp for her father, the present Mrs. Armytage had not courage to silence his lamentations.

"Hardywood can have no prejudices against these Baltimores; Hardywood has no filial ingratitude to resent against your brother," said she, when recapitulating to Sophia the evidence of the old steward, "and *he* admits that this fellow, by whom Arthur has been taken in to marry his daughter, is little better than a swindler!"

A still harder trial awaited her when she went to pass a few days at Greta Castle, soon after the newspaper announcement of the event

in her family. Conscious of the former ungracious coldness of her demeanour towards the Rotherhams, she could not help feeling, as she drove along the avenue, that now was their time to triumph over her—*now* that they saw her defeated alike in the maintenance of her parental authority, and her careful conservation of the purity of her family connexions—*now* was the time for the house of Greta to oppress her with the magnitude of its superiority.

But Mrs. Armytage reckoned without her host—without her hostess. Lord Rotherham met her, as was his courteous custom, at the foot of the great staircase, and instead of affecting lofty ignorance of what had been passing at Holywell, or (in the style of Mr. Wenmersley) a magnanimous determination to see the thing in its best light, he observed in a low voice, as she leaned on his arm to ascend the stairs, "Believe me, I am truly grieved that so old a neighbour should have expe-

rienced the vexation I know you must have been undergoing. Arthur has disappointed us all. For now the business is over, I may own to you, my dear Madam, without indelicacy, that both Lady Rotherham and myself had cherished a remote hope of his becoming our son-in-law. Laura and your son had been playfellows from children; and—but it is useless now to talk of it!" he continued, pressing her arm—when he saw that, for once in her life, his stern neighbour was almost affected to tears; and Lady Rotherham, guessing what had been their subject of conversation when her husband and Mrs. Armytage approached, added in a feeling voice, as she pressed her hands to welcome her to the Castle—"It ought not to have happened to *you*, who have been so exemplary a mother!"

What a lesson for Mrs. Armytage; knowing, as she did, how harshly her jealous pride had uttered an interdiction to Arthur, four

years before, against the frequency of his visits to Greta Castle! Suspecting him to be attaching himself to Lady Laura, she dreaded lest her aristocratic neighbours should for a moment imagine her intent upon forming an alliance with the family. "I will not have you continually inviting Lord Greta to Holywell; he will imagine we are making up to him on Sophy's account!" she had imperiously observed to Arthur. "Nor can anything be more unsatisfactory to me, than that you should pass your life at the Castle, exposing us to the degradation of letting people suppose you intend to make your appearance in the county under sanction of Lord Rotherham's patronage!"

Yet these Rotherhams were the very people who, without the smallest drawback of affectation or selfishness, frankly came forward to avow their disappointment that Arthur Armytage had not proposed to their rich and beautiful daughter.

Sophy felt deeply for her mother. She saw that the proud woman was immeasurably lessened in her own esteem by the superior generosity of the Rotherhams. They had proved themselves nobler than herself.

CHAPTER VI.

Be it remembered that whoever envies another, confesses his superiority; and let those be reformed by their pride, who have lost their virtue.

JOHNSON.

"I NEVER saw any one look more completely down in the mouth than poor Mrs. Armytage at dinner to-day!" said Wemmersley, of Mill Hill, to his wife, as they were returning home together on the night of Mrs. Armytage's visit to Greta Castle.

Mrs. Wemmersley answered nothing. Being one of the fastidious, she was grieved to hear a husband of hers give utterance to such an expression as "down in the mouth!" He had no right to indulge in such vulgarisms, while she, so elegantly attired, and so intimate a friend of the Duchess of Spalding, was sitting primly by his side.

"After all, you see, our friend Mrs. Armytage's pretensions are beginning to find their own level," he resumed. "Hitherto she has evidently thought herself the first person in this part of the country."

"The Duchess of Spalding declares she would as soon associate with a corporal of dragoons!"

"Electioneering pique! The Duchess knows the old lady wants Arthur to stand for Thoroton, against Leicester Spalding. But really the authority Mrs. Armytage has long affected to assume among us, was growing unbearable. Her pride has now received a check; and we shall have her on our own terms."

"I made it a point to inquire of Sophy this evening, (when I knew *she* must overhear me,) how her mother kept up her spirits through this disagreeable affair; and whether it would be possible for them ever to visit such people as the Baltimores? But while she hesitated what to answer, Lord Greta, whose conversa-

tion with her I had interrupted, observed, 'Why not? In this world, circumstances compel one to be acquainted with such very odious people!' Which certainly was treating the connexions of the Armytages more cavalierly than even I should have ventured."

"Are you quite sure the impertinence was intended for them?" inquired Mrs. Wemmersley, sensitively. "Greta is such a strange, dry fellow, that I hardly know what to make of him!"

"Sophy Armytage evidently thought so, for she gave him *such* a reproachful look!"

"*That* does not re-assure me. Miss Sophia affects magnanimity. And either that love-affair between her and his friend Edgar Rainsford, or his own friendship for her brother, or some other cause, which I suppose they understand, has caused a prodigious intimacy between Lord Greta and the young lady."

"I am sure I don't wonder; he is so charming, so conciliating, so considerate. He never

meets me without inquiring all sorts of particulars concerning the progress of my greenhouse."

"Yes; that he may have the gratification of hearing you play Mrs. Malaprop with the botanical names."

"You put such strange misconstructions on things. It was only to-day, at dessert, he made me give him the whole account of our tour in Switzerland last autumn."

"Elinor, you had better take care of Lord Greta. You are just the sort of person on whom he would delight in playing off his mystifications."

"What do you mean? What sort of person?"

"Oh! no matter! He tried once or twice with *me*, but found me too hard for him. To-day, for instance, when I asked him 'what news from town?' he pointed to the papers lying on the table, and said he had not found time to read the great letters; to which I re-

plied, that 'since I had discovered the great letters to be written by the Treasury Secretaries, I never found time to read them at all.' You may suppose that my young Lord Sec. looked rather blue! As if I intended to learn from *him* the stale news to be found in the public prints!"

"I see what you mean *now*; but I defy him to make a fool of *me*,' said Mrs. Wemmersley, as the carriage stopped at the lodge-gates of Mill Hill. "I defy him."

"And so do I," muttered her husband, helping her up the steps of the little portico; and at very little trouble to conceal his contempt for his silly affected wife. "But at all events, take my advice, and beware of Lord Greta and his sister."

This caution, however, was superfluous. The young people at Greta Castle only despised Mrs. Wemmersley for the ignorance and inanity which rendered her society so wearisome and unprofitable; it was only Wemmersley whom,

though clever and well-informed, they really *disliked*. Wemmersley was a mean-minded man. Envy was the gnawing-worm that rendered his form so spare and his soul so cankered. With a fortune of two thousand a-year, good health, and good character, he might have been pronounced without a care, without a want. Yet he was miserable; from mere covetousness of the position or possessions of every man of his acquaintance! The two friendships which he happened to form at college, had proved the bane of his happiness through life. His chum, Sir George Lumley, having married a very pretty woman, Wemmersley, bent upon securing a prettier, had united himself to a fool; while his other crony, Harry Vincent, having inherited a hunting-box in Bedfordshire, Wemmersley, unable to support the sight of his shrubberies and paddocks, had immediately purchased Mill Hill to complete the measure of his misfortunes.

Mill Hill was doubtless intended as a place

of purgatory for an envious man. Fifty acres, jammed in between the fine property of Mrs. Armytage and the noble estates of the Earl of Rotherham. Fifty acres, overlooked from the lofty height of Greta Castle, and covered in from public observation by the spreading woods of Holywell. Mrs. Armytage's park-wall ruined the view from its sloping lawn, while an unsightly farm of Lord Rotherham's disturbed the symmetry of its pleasure-grounds. Wemmersley's pride was hurt at every turn; and the soreness of his selfishness constantly rubbing against the superiority of his neighbours, caused the unfortunate man to lead a life of penance. Mill Hill, gay, pretty, elegant—Mill Hill inflicted as severe mortifications on its owner as the humiliations of the workhouse on some high-spirited pauper! But Wemmersley had one consolation in *his* woes: either Lord Rotherham or Mrs. Armytage would have given a large sum to have bought him out. Mill Hill, an object of importance

to the estates of both, had been disposed of without their knowledge, by a Thoroton attorney of the name of Gumption, who owed them an election grudge; and Wemmersley was chiefly induced to retain the property by his secret certainty, that the proud proprietors of Greta and Holywell never passed his gates without longing to pull them down, and incorporate his well-wooded paddock within their own ring-fence! Yes! he was an object of envy! What a consolation for one so much a martyr to that embittering passion!

For it is by no means indispensable for an envious person to appreciate the thing he envies; sufficient for him that it should be coveted by others! The regard of Mrs. Armytage, accordingly, was desirable to Wemmersley, because he observed that the Rotherhams and others of their common neighbours were ambitious of her good graces; nor could he bear, on the other hand, to see a larger portion of the courtesies of the Rotherhams

dispensed to Mrs. Armytage than to himself. He, accordingly, never omitted an occasion of exciting the inflammable temper of the latter against their neighbours at Greta Castle, or neglected an opportunity of proving to Lord and Lady Rotherham, that Mrs. Armytage was undeserving their esteem.

But *there* he was less successful! Lord Rotherham's temper was as serene as his mind was honourable. It was difficult to make *him* see things in a distorted shape. Honouring Mrs. Armytage as a valuable member of the community, a conscientious steward of the gifts of Providence, and, moreover, a staunch Whig like himself, (for political opinions form, after all, one of the strongest bonds of modern amity,) he was not to be shaken in his friendship by the insinuations of a tale-bearer. Besides, his son Greta dearly loved Arthur Armytage, and his daughter Laura, Sophia; nay, he sometimes fancied that these reciprocal attachments went further still; and that Lord

Greta and Sophy, and Arthur and Lady Laura, were likely to cement a nearer alliance between the families. He desired nothing better. To see his daughter settled at Holywell, within half an hour's ride of her family, as the wife of a plain, honourable and, (as he never failed to add,) Whig country gentleman, would have gratified every desire of his honest heart; and as to his son-in-law, although he could have desired that Lord Greta's marriage might have done somewhat more towards the extension of his family dignities, he had not a word to urge against so pleasing and so highly-principled a girl as the daughter of Mrs. Armytage of Holywell.

But whatever might be the views of the Earl, those of the soft-eyed Sophia were of a different nature. She had already disposed of herself. She was *not* engaged—had never even received a proposal, (except from one rash Cornet of Dragoons, who had invited her to become his for ever and ever, as Cornets

do, after three days' acquaintance at Doncaster Races,) and yet she was as much disposed of as if seriously betrothed. Edgar Rainsford, her brother Arthur's chosen friend and vacation companion, too sensible to her merits to disguise his passionate admiration, too poor to venture on a tender of his hand to the daughter of Mrs. Armytage, was working his way to distinction, and through distinction to fortune, encouraged by the hope of finding in Sophia's preference his exceeding rich reward; and though not a word in admission of mutual attachment had been uttered on either side, each had perfect confidence in the constancy of the other. With respect to Arthur's passion for Lady Laura, time had already proved the fallacy of Lord Rotherham's expectations.

"Your mother is looking very ill, Sophy," said her ladyship to Miss Armytage, as they stood together in the dressing-room of the latter, waiting for the ladies' maids, on the first night of the Armytages' visit to Greta Castle.

"Do you think so? I have long feared it: but people living together are bad judges on such points; and I was willing to mistrust my own opinion."

"The Wemmersleys had prepared us to find Mrs. Armytage sadly altered."

"The Wemmersleys!"

"But both my father and mother consider her much more affected than they expected."

Sophia's colour rose, and the tears came into her eyes.

"You know I am shockingly abrupt. Pray forgive me! Perhaps I have expressed myself too strongly," said Lady Laura, throwing her arm caressingly round her friend; "but I thought it right your eyes should be fully opened on such a subject. Mrs. Armytage ought to have advice."

"Advice! My dearest Laura!—*you*, who know my mother! Besides, what could all the physicians in the world do to relieve her? My mother is hurt at heart."

"Poor woman!"

"Except by unmarrying Arthur, I know nothing that would restore her."

"And are all the shocking stories *true*, then, that the Wemmersleys have been telling us? From such a source, I ventured to disbelieve them, and to attribute your mother's opposition to mere perversity. Don't shake your head and look so angry! You know she has her little fits of perversity; and as Mrs. Armytage's disposition and mine are so ugly in that respect as to resemble each other, I, at least, can readily forgive them. But for once, it seems, she is right; and Arthur has really disgraced himself!"

"Don't say *that*—pray don't say *that!*" cried Sophia, starting as if the word could reach the sensitive ears of her mother. "We have no grounds for the accusation. These Baltimores, although they offer nothing attractive as connexions, are perfectly respectable. And with regard to the poor girl, surely at eighteen there

can be nothing very objectionable about her; nothing which my brother's society and my mother's wise counsels might not easily correct? All we know of her is, that she is very young and very pretty."

"*Very* pretty?"—involuntarily inquired Lady Laura. "Your *brother's* account, I suppose!"

"No!—all the congratulatory letters we have received, agree in terming her remarkably pretty; and one or two, and from persons on whom we can rely, go so far as to call her an interesting girl. Yet, the more she is praised, the more my poor mother seems displeased."

"*Poor*, indeed! You easy-minded people, Sophy, little know what we stubborn ones have to go through, in bearing with the crosses of life. But you should get Dr. Grant to talk to Mrs. Armytage. Dr. Grant could talk the savageness out of a bear! How often has he reasoned *me* out of my fits of ill-humour!"

"I have already applied to him, although with some reluctance; for you know he depends on the living of Thoroton, which is in my mother's gift; and I hardly thought it fair to hazard a misunderstanding between them."

"I am sure that is the last motive which would have deprived you of Dr. Grant's assistance!"

"I know it; and of the interest of disinterested people, one ought to be doubly careful. However, I *did* ask him to stand Arthur's friend, and I suspect he acceded to my request and addressed a letter to my mother, (a verbal remonstrance she would have silenced at once) for on our way here to-day she pronounced a formal eulogium upon his good sense, and freedom from selfishness, in the manner of a person who wishes to prove that she is not affronted. But a minute afterwards, she attacked the Baltimores, by indirect reference, more severely than ever. In short, I have lost all hope!"

"They are gone to the continent, I understand?"

"They are;" replied Sophia, needing no explicit interpretation of her friend's "*they!*" —"Perhaps, under all the circumstances, the best step Arthur could have taken. My mother will be less in the way of hearing them talked about; and by the time they return, her displeasure may have subsided."

Lady Laura shook her head. "A poor chance, in any case! Well—we must hope for the best;—that Mrs. Armytage may not prove too implacable, or Mrs. Arthur too odious!" said she, bending forward to kiss the forehead of her friend, as their attendants approached the door.

"Good night," said Sophia in reply to her salutation. "Oh! my dearest Laura! When I reflect upon the prospects in which I once ventured to indulge on Arthur's account——"

"Not a word on that subject," interrupted Lady Laura, hastily taking up her candle. "It

is not *his* fault, if we were all sillier than he was! But for Mr. Wemmersley's way of wishing us joy on your brother's marriage, I should have forgotten that. But, no matter!" said she, checking herself,—"Let us now go quietly to bed, to *sleep* if we can; without indulging in dreams that may only tend to disturb ourselves and our neighbours."

CHAPTER VII.

Stand not amazed, here is no remedy!—
In love, the heavens themselves do guide the state;
Money buys lands, but wives are sold by fate.

SHAKSPEARE.

MEANWHILE, Arthur Armytage and his bride, hand clasped in hand, were reclining in the "capital charott" as it rolled smoothly along the banks of the Rhine. "Jack" would have found much to commend in the patent axles; Sophia, in the scenery through which they were passing; Arthur and Marian admired nothing, saw nothing, enjoyed nothing but

Their own hearts' most sweet society!

Both were at a time of life when the positive has so limited an influence, and the ideal so wide a range,—when so little of the world is

known and so much conjectured,—that, though there was no end to their speculations, there was a very speedy one to their reminiscences. Neither of them seemed desirous of clinging to the past. Their existence was now beginning; their future all brightness and hope. On Marian's happiness, indeed, there was no drawback; that of Arthur's *did* occasionally receive some check, when a halt at Brussels, Frankfort, or Stutgardt produced letters from England; for Sophia's to himself afforded no prospect of a reconciliation with his mother; while Marian's communications from her family, in which she insisted on his participating, were of a nature to transfix him with dismay. Such a family! If his mother had decided so resolutely against them unknown, unheard, unseen, undreamt of, what would be her abhorrence, when Jack Baltimore had hallooed for half an hour at her elbow; or when she should have perused one of the Cheltenham epistles of Mrs. Dyke Robsey!

"Your aunt seems very fond of gaiety, for her time of life," observed Armytage one day, after listening to Marian's animated account of a pic-nic at Hounslow, "with the officers," which she had enjoyed the preceding season.

"Is she not?—my aunt cannot bear being alone; and Mr. Robsey, you know, counts for next to nothing. Besides, he is almost always taken up with Parliament and that sort of thing."

"I was not aware that he was at all active in the House?"

"*In*, I don't know; but *out*, he is particularly busy. Three or four members used to dine with him three or four times a-week, and they talked of nothing but bills, and motions, and divisions, and I can't tell what."

"Nor they neither, I suspect!—Is Mr. Robsey with government?"

"He has no place under government."

"I know.—But does he vote with ministers?"

"I have not the least idea with whom he votes. But I know that he is constantly saying 'I am all for Railroads and Radical Reform.' He repeats that sentence fifty times a-day, let people be talking of what they please, as if it were an answer to everything; with his little wheezing voice and short dry cough, 'I am all for Railroads and Radical Reform,' you must have heard him say it a thousand times!"

"There is so much difficulty in hearing what he says, poor man;—and I am afraid I never paid much attention to his sayings or doings."

"You are very ungrateful, then. My uncle took a fancy to *you* at first sight. I recollect his observing at breakfast, the morning after you were first introduced to us, and my aunt was telling him what a fine property you had in Yorkshire, 'Well, I hope, with all my heart, it may benefit by some of the new railroads.'"

A jealous pang shot through the heart of Arthur! How very early in his acquaintance with Marian had his fine property in Yorkshire been discussed! How could he tell what share it might have had in biassing her preference!

"Mr. Dyke Robsey, then, is a Radical?" said he, in a petulant voice.

"I do not exactly know, and I should think it was not of much consequence, to himself or anybody else. Only I remember, that, at Brighton, my aunt was always lamenting he was something which prevented our being asked to the Pavilion."

"What absurd nonsense!"

"Yes, very absurd!—As she often said, why should Mr. Robsey's politics affect *her*? —and certainly many of our acquaintance went to the royal balls, who had not half so much right as my aunt, with all her fine diamonds, —and she a Baronet's daughter."

Arthur smiled at the simplicity of his wife.

There is a period of married life when the simplicity of a wife is peculiarly attractive.

"By-the-way," said he, "the O'Moran Baronetcy is extinct, I fancy? Had your grandfather Sir Emilius O'Moran more daughters than your mother and Mrs. Robsey?"

"Oh! there is my uncle Dominick, who lives always in Ireland;—agent, you know, to Lord Ballina;—and then there is my poor uncle Bob, and poor Sir Marcus."

"What uncle Bob?—what poor Sir Marcus?"

"Mamma and my aunt never talk of them if they can help it. My uncle Bob has been in the Limerick Lunatic Asylum these twenty years; and Sir Marcus, you know, has been obliged to reside in America ever since the Rebellion."

"Is it possible?"

"My aunt has been very kind to him; Mr. Robsey settled an annuity on Sir Marcus when he married."

"How very strange that no one should have mentioned their names to me?"

"Not at all. Mamma and aunt are naturally anxious to have them forgotten, for my uncle Dominick's sake; because, perhaps, he might lose his situation, if the history of his family came to Lord Ballina's knowledge."

"I will answer for it," mused poor Arthur in secret, as he threw himself back in the carriage in no very enviable mood of mind, "that by this time Wemmersley has managed to ferret out the whole O'Moran pedigree and to carry it to Holywell. And my mother, who will not even take an Irish servant into her house!"

Another time, when Marian in high spirits had been recounting anecdotes of her gay winter at Brighton, her brilliant season in town, Armytage had the vexation to perceive that her circle of acquaintance was of the class most disagreeable even to himself. During the period of his courtship, the coterie in Portland Place had been comparatively small, and

comparatively select; and either he had not perceived, or had not cared of what material it might be composed. He had, of course, never expected to find the best society frequent such a house as the Robseys. But he was now mortified in the discovery that, as in most instances where great wealth is allied to great want of tact, Mrs. Dyke's good-nature had been imposed upon to accept the acquaintance of every tiger in town; and that, in addition to these tinsel stars, she had been induced, by her unlucky appetite for finery and the fine, to compromise with the want of respectability of a certain number of persons of high birth, who affect to secede from the society of people of their own caste, from which they have been, in fact, ejected as unworthy. Poor Marian's Lords and Ladies were all of very questionable notoriety.

Deeply hurt by the facts thus successively, and as it were, accidentally, brought to his knowledge, Arthur began to get somewhat

uneasy on the score of the former associations of his wife. Trusting that he now knew the worst, he wished to know no more—*to hear* no more. He checked her by a sudden change of subject whenever she recurred to home, and directed her attention with eagerness towards new scenes and new objects, in hopes of storing her mind with new ideas ere she encountered the ordeal of an introduction to his mother.

And the pretty little bride was easily influenced. The moment Arthur expressed a desire that she would improve herself in French, and join with him in the study of German, she applied herself in right earnest; and soon, if the truth must be told, outstepped the progress of her fellow-student. There was one point meanwhile, on which she needed no encouragement to application. Mrs. Arthur Armytage was, not by nature, but by art—*strictly* by art—a brilliant musician. Very few

professional performers exceeded her in execution on the piano; and though Arthur would have been content to lay Herz and Hummel and their works at the bottom of the Rhine or the Red Sea, he felt it his duty to commend a proficiency which must have cost his wife so much time and diligence to acquire. He only wished in his heart that her performance had not so much resembled the gabbling of a parrot. He admitted to himself, that the more Marian's temper and disposition developed themselves to his acquaintance, the more he saw in her that was honest and endearing; but he also admitted, that it was scarcely possible for him to have selected a wife whose tastes were less congenial with his own, or whose connexions wese less eligible. He thought it strange that all this had never struck him previous to his marriage; but nothing now remained but to make the best of it. He would turn to the bright side of things! Luckily, a bright side existed. Marian was the most docile

well as the as prettiest creature in the world: she needed only a little training; and no one could be trained more easily.

Under such circumstances, nothing could be more reasonable than Arthur's determination to pass the winter abroad, previously to soliciting the notice of his mother for his wife, and settling for life in his own country. Paris would be a very agreeable *séjour* for both of them: Marian might have as much music as she pleased, and mix in society both pleasant and profitable, without hurting his pride by contact with her own family and connexions; and as to himself, "he knew lots of fellows in Paris; he could easily get into the Club; *he* should make it out very well."

In Paris, therefore, they established themselves, and in a handsome style. By the prudent forecast of guardians and solicitors, there is usually a loose sum of money left tangible when two young people marry, under the name

of outfit, which enables them to acquire, during their first year of independence, habits of expenditure they can never afterwards lay aside; and accordingly, the money predestined to procure tables and chairs, plate and linen, for the box in the sporting country, with a good bottle of wine in its cellar, a good horse in its stable, and a spare bed for a friend, (or a father-in-law,) was fated gradually to melt away in Opera-boxes, finery, and the most profitless of unprofitable hospitality.

Still, Arthur fancied he was gaining time. His kind sister, unwilling to distress him by acknowledging the implacable spirit still maintained against him by her mother, constantly wrote that, she trusted "a few more months would effect the re-union of the family;" and aware that, as the winds blow where they list, Mrs. Armytage resented or relented at her own good time and pleasure, he waited—waited patiently. His Club was a pleasant Club—

his wife an affectionate wife—his life agreeable—his prospects not hopeless. There could be no occasion for him to humble himself to the dust at the feet of Mrs. Armytage.

CHAPTER VIII.

> The gentleman is learn'd—a most rare speaker—
> To tutors none more bound; his training such,
> That he may furnish and instruct great teachers.
>
> SHAKSPEARE.

AT Holywell, meanwhile—sober, steady, solemn, oak-shaded Holywell—all proceeded with as much regularity as though its economy were part of the system of the universe. Old Hardywood received the rents for his lady, and Simmons his orders *from* her; and the new park-wall between the west lodge and Woodin's farm (commenced for the purpose of giving employment on the estate) was slowly proceeding; the drainage of Maudsley Moor begun, and the planting of an adjoining heath prepared for. All the activity usually visible on the vast property of a wealthy and wise

proprietor, was perceptible in the occupations of Mrs. Armytage. It seemed almost sacrilege to Sophia, that things could go on so well while Arthur was wandering on the Continent and at variance with her mother.

"Do not make yourself uneasy, my dear young lady," had been Dr. Grant's consolatory admonition. "Your mother has resisted expostulation, has resisted persuasion; her enlightenment must be the work of Providence! and, believe me, the greater her harshness, the more flagrant her injustice, the warmer will be her return towards her son. Let her exhaust her indignation. Mrs. Armytage will end by growing angrier with herself than with *him*."

But Sophy's anxieties soon acquired a new stimulus. By the elevation of one of its sitting members to the peerage, a vacancy having occurred in the representation of the borough of Thoroton, Mrs. Armytage sent off an express for the eldest son of her cousin, Sir John Maudsley, of Maudsley Hall, and established

his head-quarters at Holywell for the canvass; without the slightest allusion to her former parliamentary projects in favour of her son! Now Reginald Maudsley was a person on many accounts most objectionable to poor Sophia. Mrs. Armytage, strongly attached to her own family and its interests, and regarding Sir John Maudsley as head of the house, and heir-presumptive to Holywell, in case of failure of her own issue, entertained a high regard for him and all his generation; more especially for Reginald, a young gentleman brought up on the high-pressure-of-intellect system, to know more than the rest of the world, and to despise it in proportion. Betutored from his cradle, the little great man, the embryo Newton, the incipient Lord Chatham, was the most pragmatical of pretenders; dwarfed in his moral nature by the excessive interference of art. But his kinswoman at Holywell saw no faults in him. The regularity of his conduct at college had been no

less edifying than that of poor Arthur Armytage was indiscreet; and when, during their holidays and vacations, Reginald Maudsley joined their parties at Holywell, he was invariably held up to his young cousins as an object for emulation and admiration; from which it naturally followed that Arthur could not endure the sight of his cousin. He called him a prig,—he thought him a hypocrite,—he detested his ostentatious habits of study and moderation. In process of time, Sophy began to dislike him too; for her brother's lively friend, Edgar Rainsford, suspecting, and perhaps with reason, that Mrs. Armytage entertained a project of uniting her daughter with the representative of the elder branch of her family, spared no occasion of showing up the shallow egotism of young Maudsley.

And this was the man who, now that Arthur was banished from Holywell, and his friend Rainsford an absentee from its threshold, was about to be established by her mother's fire-

side, as the rival of her son, and the opponent of Lord Leicester Spalding!

"I wish you had seen Spalding's face this morning, my dear Miss Armytage," said Lord Greta, having accompanied his sister one morning on a visit to Holywell. "As Laura and I rode hither, we met him with his electioneering cavalcade; and when I told him your mother had just driven into Thoroton with her triumphal coach and four, and Maudsley, like a man in buckram, by her side, conning a speech with four quotations from Horace, and three from Juvenal, my sister was obliged to throw him her salts-bottle, to save him from fainting."

"As if your sister carried one!" exclaimed Lady Laura with indignation. "Allow her to leave such fine-ladyisms to Mrs. Wemmersley and the Duchess of Spalding."

"Or Leicester, himself; pray don't forget Lord Leicester—Leicester is the finest lady in the Riding—writes silken verses in the silken

Book of Beauty—and washes his poodle in milk of roses. I quite enjoy the thoughts of Leicester Spalding matched against that polyglot edition of Erasmus, your cousin Reginald!"

"Don't abuse Mr. Maudsley to Sophia," observed Lady Laura. "The Wemmersleys assured me yesterday that she is engaged to her cousin; Mrs. Armytage having disinherited Arthur, and entailed her whole property upon the son and heir of Sir John."

"Under such circumstances, mamma would scarcely choose the Wemmersleys as her confidants," said Sophy, scarcely knowing what to answer.

"Do you imagine," inquired Lord Greta, colouring highly on observing how small a portion of the report Miss Armytage thought proper to disavow, "that Wemmersley waits to be *chosen* as confidant? No, no! Wemmersley knows of every change of ministry before the King; of every vacant mitre before the Arch-

bishop of Canterbury; of every decision in chancery before the mace and seals! He is quicker in his intelligence than courier or king's messenger; nay, when mischief is in the wind, the very telegraph is a snail to him. I should not be much surprised if Wemmersley had already drawn out a draught of the marriage-settlements between the future member for Thoroton and Miss Sophia Armytage."

"I should be much surprised to hear of Miss Sophia Armytage signing them," interrupted Lady Laura, perceiving from her brother's volubility that Wemmersley's report had excited his uneasiness.

"If you saw the Wemmersleys yesterday," interrupted Sophia, "perhaps you can inform me whether their relation, Mr. Lomax, has made his appearance at Mill Hill? My cousin Reginald is anxious for his arrival. I believe they have been in correspondence for some months past concerning the state of prison-discipline in the United States."

"Do you mean a long-limbed man, who wears an immense muslin neckcloth; speaks in aphorisms; maintains a perpetual single combat with what he calls the aristocratic usurpation; and cannot so much as take a pinch of snuff without connecting the measure with some precept of political economy?"

"I never saw Mr. Lomax."

"There, Laura! I told you that bore of a man at Wemmersley's left hand yesterday was a rich relation. I was certain no one less cogently qualified would presume to be so disagreeable."

"Disagreeable? *I* thought him the pleasantest person I had ever met at Mill Hill; so original; so sturdily Yankee; so undisguised in his wonder at Lord Leicester Spalding's languid impertinence; so different from the old-world people, who are careful never to seem astonished! But tell me, Sophia, what does your mother say to Lord Leicester taking up his

quarters at Mill Hill during the election? Is she not indignant against the Wemmersleys?"

"Not in the least. They are people whose offences she overlooks with the greatest indifference; as if too small to excite her anger. When there was a report that Lord Rotherham had taken Lord Leicester Spalding by the hand, then she was indeed angry! If your father had backed him against my cousin Maudsley, I think mamma would have risked half her fortune to secure Reginald's election."

"*Reginald!*"—thought Lord Greta; but he said nothing, though Lady Laura directed a significant glance towards him.

"What news from your brother?" was his well-imagined mode of changing the conversation.

"None that I consider very satisfactory. Arthur and his wife appear to be entering eagerly into the dissipation of Paris, which is

the last thing likely to be satisfactory to my mother."

"Wemmersley assures me he has taken to playing desperately. I never thought Arthur fond of play?" said Lord Greta.

"I never heard of his touching a card!" exclaimed Sophia. "*Play?* No. I am quite certain he is not addicted to play. And yet," continued she, checking herself, "how can I be certain of anything about him *now*, under the influence of a person with whom I am not even acquainted!"

She had no time to inquire further. The Holywell carriage with its utmost complement of postilions and outriders, covered with the ribbons of the "Maudsley for ever" party, drove rapidly past the windows; and the moment her mother and cousin entered the room, Sophy saw by the countenances of both that something was wrong.

"The head-ache which prevented your accompanying us to Thoroton does not appear

to have been very troublesome," said Mrs. Armytage, addressing Sophia in an angry voice, after she had gone through the usual greetings to her young visitors.

"Pray, my dear madam, do not attribute our presence here either to Miss Armytage's convalescence, or her generosity!" hastily interrupted Lord Greta. "We were under the necessity of personally assaulting old Simmons in order to obtain admittance, and of assuring him that his pretext that 'Miss Sophia was lying down' was in every sense a lying one. The pun of course was Laura's, although she affects to look so scandalized!"—he continued, not a little amused to perceive how much his harum-scarum mode of drawing off the enemy from Sophia provoked the lofty contempt of Mr. Candidate Maudsley.

"To own the truth," he added,—resolved to convert the scorn of Reginald into fury,—"I was chiefly anxious to take the entrenchments of Holywell by storm, in order to secure Miss

Armytage's hand for the first dance of the ball which I conclude we shall have at Thoroton in honour of Mr. Maudsley's return."

"But at which, as a matter of course, Sophia would hold herself engaged to her cousin," said Mrs. Armytage haughtily.

"Pardon me!—the prize is mine by all the rules of chivalry and *Beau Nash!*" cried Lord Greta, with a glance that defied Sophia to contradict his assertion. "Priority of demand, priority of assent, pre-engagement! Besides, Miss Armytage was probably as well aware as myself, that Mr. Maudsley, the new member, and Mr. Mandsley, her cousin, are one, but not the same. The successful candidate will, of course, belong to Miss Dip, the daughter of the Mayor, or Miss Gumption, the sister of his attorney, or Miss Eitherside, the cousin of the returning officer. A popular member forgets all kindred and its claims, and during Mr. Mandsley's election week, the majesty of Holy-

well must defer to the majesty of the Blue Boar."

Sophia, dreading an explosion of the wrath which she saw lowering in her mother's countenance, now attempted to conciliate Mrs. Armytage by interesting herself in the result of their canvass. She could not have chosen a more unlucky topic! By the intrigues of the same attorney who had contrived to sell Mill Hill to Mr. Wemmersley, Arthur Armytage had been actually put in nomination for Thoroton! The strife between mother and son must now become apparent to the whole county! A poll had been demanded; and

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was already officially registered!

CHAPTER IX.

He draweth out the thread of his verbosity finer than the staple of his argument. I abhor such fanatical phantasms, such point-device companions, such rackers of orthography!

SHAKSPEARE.

"I AM free to admit that I cannot altogether reconcile to myself the discordant phases of your social and political phenomena!" observed Mr. Leonidas Lomax, the uncle from Carolina, as he sat sipping a cup of weak tea that evening at Mill Hill, with his pocket-handkerchief, a "stout cotton article," protectingly outspread over his nether habiliments, while he sentimentally "colloquized" with his kinsman Wemmersley. "You inform me, Sir, that under the operation of the Reform Bill, Thoroton has become a free and independent borough; and

the inhabitants, I perceive, arrogate to themselves the privileges of independence, by holding meetings of a political tendency; by drinking Radical toasts, and venting free opinions upon the very parliament which has endowed them with a political existence."

"Nothing very new in popular ingratitude," replied Wemmersley, annoyed to perceive that his silly wife's wise uncle had set in for a prose.

"Nothing! admitted! fully admitted, my dear Sir. But that which is very new to me, and at present very incomprehensible, is that the individuals in question, born in a class of life which entitles us to believe them educated, and if educated, enlightened, express week after week, month after month, year after year, their dissatisfaction at the insupportable heaviness of taxation, the overweaning influence of the aristocracy, the corrupsubserviency of the press, the un-apostolic avidity of the clergy, the supine inactivity of

government; yet the moment a lad in a showy coat, with white kid gloves, a full pocket, an empty head, such as the fribble who quitted Mill Hill this morning, stands half-laughing in their faces, half-holding his nose, to demand their sweet voices in favour of his return as their representative to parliament, — *heigh! presto!* they are ready to toss up their caps in his honour, and to cry 'Spalding for ever!'— Twenty thousand souls!—men with beards upon their faces, and accountable to posterity for the conservation of their rights and charters, to invest their civic authority in the person of a gristle-boned, vellum-skinned, flute-voiced automaton; whose business in life is to gild over the iron buttresses of despotism, which uphold the brazen statue of that Moloch, the English Oligarchy; and all, if I rightly interpret the information of my dear niece, Mistress Wemmersley, because the Duchess, his mother, purchases a few ells of fustian for her charity-school, and a few deal-

tables for her laundry, of the retail-traders of the borough! Such conduct is irreconcileable with the impulses of rational man!"

"The Duke of Spalding has the finest property in this part of the country," said Wemmersley, as hastily as he dared. "It is but natural that the people of Thoroton should consult his wishes concerning its parliamentary representation; or that he should prefer a member of his own family, as most devoted to the care of its interest."

"To the care of *his* interests, you mean. To *his* interests, I can well understand this young gentleman, whom I can scarcely call a man, to be thoroughly devoted. I am yet to learn by what process his unstudious ignorance is to be enlightened; or by what art his presumptuous frivolity is to be rendered sedative."

"We will leave it to the electors of Thoroton to determine," said Wemmersley, not venturing to contradict the rich relation whom he could not hope to convince.

"Each of whom will leave it to the other," resumed Leonidas; "and between the stupidity of some and the venality of the rest, your borough will be compromised in the eyes of the country, and contribute its mite to the gradual deterioration of the British character and the retardation of the march of federalism."

"Oh! my dear Sir," cried Mrs. W., snatching at the word character, "indeed, you go too far; Lord Leicester Spalding is a young man of the highest honour; and you know it is something to be represented by a gentleman."

"My notions of the word *gentleman*, and yours, are somewhat at variance, my dear lady. Integrity, for instance, enters indispensably into *my* list of the characteristics of a gentleman; yet, if I rightly understood your friend the young lord, yesterday, in the narrative of his proceedings at the last Newmarket meeting——"

"*Who* breaks a butterfly upon a wheel?" cried Wemmersley. "The boastings of a vapouring boy like Spalding are not to be measured by rule and compass. Besides, he saw your amazement, noted the solemnity of your commentary, and instantly set about mystifying you by a thousand exaggerations."

"'You gentlemen of England, who live at home at ease,' seem to derive wonderful pleasure in insulting more laborious persons, and in misleading seekers after information," continued Lomax, in the same didactic tone. "Since my arrival in the mother-country, whenever I have raised objections to the flightiness of *this* person's conversation, I am assured that he is quizzing me; or expressed misgivings respecting *that* person's veracity"—

"Scarcely a safe subject on which to express mistrust," interrupted Wemmersley, entertaining a shrewd suspicion that his Yankee kinsman alluded indirectly to himself. "To return, however, to Lord Leicester Spalding.

"Pray set your heart at ease respecting his parliamentary dignities—for, by the dextrous manœuvres of one of the most blackguard attorneys in existence, both the Spalding and Maudsley parties are defeated, and Arthur Armytage placed at the head of the poll!"

"Arthur Armytage?—Any relation to that handsome Semiramis-looking woman who called here the other day?"

"Her son,—her only son."

"A young man?"

"Three-and-twenty."

"And freely elected!—Well, she has now just cause for her pride; for proud enough she is, or I am considerably mistaken. I could plainly discern that she despised your house, and everything, and every one within it!"

"Without losing time by proving you mistaken in your last assertion, permit me to set you right concerning your first. Nothing could have been more galling to the pride

of Mrs. Armytage, than the election of her son."

"More quizzing, I calculate," said Lomax with a grim smile.

"Mere matter of fact, I assure you. *She* was the means of bringing forward Mr. Maudsley, and will resent any injury offered to him as offered to herself. I should not be surprised if this electioneering manœuvre of Gumption's were to be the means of perpetuating the dissensions between Mrs. Armytage and her son."

hey are on bad terms, then?"

"So we have reason to conclude. But all we know in the neighbourhood of Mrs. Armytage's private affairs is known but by inference. She never unbends, never unfolds!"

"And what motive does inference lead you to adduce for the ill-will subsisting between your arrogant neighbour, and her son and heir? It cannot be the same natural pride,

my dear Sir, which causes her, for instance, to look down upon yourself? The lineage of which *she* boasts, is his also; the possessions in which she glories, will one day be his own."

"*Ca dépend! dépend!*" interrupted Wemmersley, with a fastidious smile.

"I beg your pardon?"

"I meant to say *that* must depend on circumstances," he rejoined, pettishly.

"If you *meant* to say so, it is a pity but that you *had* said so. The English tongue is a fine and copious language, and needs no interpretation from French gibberish. Although no longer spoken here, with the degree of purity and precision we meet with in the States, where the 'pure well of English undefiled' has descended to us, limpid and uncontaminated, from the Elizabethan age, still I have found many persons in the Old Country, speaking English with tolerable correctness."

"They are infinitely obliged to your indul-

gence!" observed Wemmersley, with a fiery glance, such as might almost have ignited the quid secretly cherished within the lanky cheek of uncle Lomax.

"But, to return to Mrs. Armytage and her family feuds. Has her son been convicted of any moral turpitude, to have provoked her unnatural enmity?"

"I am half afraid of guessing the meaning of your 'English undefiled,'" replied Wemmersley. "Here, in England, perhaps we might be tempted to call the offence of spitting on a lady's carpet, an act of moral turpitude."

"Did the new member for Thoroton offend his parent by spitting on her carpet?" calmly inquired Lomax, defying the sneer directed against him. "I calculate, then, that her abode is insufficiently furnished with spitting-boxes? It is amazing how many indispensable articles of civilized enjoyment I observe wanting, even in the first-rate houses in this country."

"I meant only to observe, that such terms as 'moral turpitude' bear a local interpretation. Arthur Armytage's offence against his mother consisted in marrying a pretty girl."

"Of disreputable character?"

"Of worse!—of obscure connexions,—when *she* happened to have set her heart upon uniting him with a ladyship—the daughter of Lord Rotherham."

"The nobleman whose aristocratic oaks overshade your pinery? The owner of Greta Castle?"

"Precisely: the owner of one of those relques of feudal grandeur and national pride, which must so greatly startle and interest you Americans, on your first glance at the Mother Country."

"Naturally enough!—as being the mansion-houses of our own ancestors, abandoned by us to the enjoyment of such of their descendants as can be content with the possession of

ancient halls and hoary forests, unenhanced by those glorious gifts of civil and religious liberty, which *we* presume to regard as the noblest portion of their inheritance."

"And, after all," demanded Mrs. Wemmersley, growing fidgetty when she observed the discussion to be assuming so personal a turn, "how will all this end about Arthur Armytage's election?"

"*That* you must consult the stars or the sybils to determine," answered her husband. "The position of Mrs. Armytage is an unprecedented one; but no doubt, with *her* lofty way of carrying things, she will contrive to make the whole county believe she has not been taken by surprise."

"I beg your pardon. What you call her lofty way of carrying things, is, after all, mere *gaucherie*."

"Mere *what*?" interrupted pertinacious uncle Lomax.

"Mere awkwardness of mind and manners.

The Duchess of Spalding declares that Mrs. Armytage has no more tact than a Muscovy duck!"

"Not to cavil at her Grace's simile, of which I confess I do not perceive the aptitude, permit me to inquire whether it may not be possible that Mrs. Armytage *despises* tact?" asked Lemax. "Tact, I take to be the accomplishment of a narrow mind — indispensable, perhaps, to a Duchess; but I do not see why the independent widow of an independent Squire should ——"

"Remember your promise, my dear Sir," interrupted Wemmersley, scarcely able to restrain his indignation when he saw a sacrilegious hand outstretched to profane one of the molten calves, the objects of his gross idolatry; — "pray, remember your promise, and do not decide on points connected with the state of English society, till at least a few weeks' experience of the stage, and acquaint-

ance with the actors, enables you to judge of the merits of the piece."

"Men and women are but men and women, I calculate, although attired in hoop petticoats, and bags and swords," observed Lomax; "but since you appear so desirous to impress upon my mind that I have hitherto dwelt among savages, and can know nothing of the practices of the civilized species—be it so! I abide the issue. As Roscommon hath it—

> 'A Satyr that comes staring from the woods
> Cannot at first speak like an orator.'"

Meanwhile, the Lady of Holywell did, indeed, find herself placed in an unprecedented situation; and one from which even the sturdy good sense with which she was endowed, scarcely sufficed to disembarrass her. She had purposed, in sending for Mr. Maudsley to become the representative of the family interest, to mark her sovereign displeasure against her son, and announce to the world an irre-

parable breach between them. That the world should judge for itself in such a juncture, and, deeming the offence of young Armytage an insufficient provocation, pronounce a separation of interests between parent and child impossible, on grounds so slight, had not entered into her calculations. Her 'people' had presumed to know her intentions better than herself, and to conclude that she could not but be secretly pleased that a son of her own should triumph at the expense of a cousin. They, good souls! would not believe her capable of turning traitress to her flesh and blood—and were of too Christianly a nature to conjecture the existence of a Brutus in petticoats, at the head of one of the prettiest rent-rolls in the Riding!

And, perhaps, they were right. Perhaps, in the midst of Mrs. Armytage's storm of indignation on finding her plans defeated, and her candidate rejected, she was for a moment secretly gratified to observe the enthusiasm

with which the people gathered to what *they* chose to consider the Holywell standard, and the warmth with which they lent their lungs and hands to acclamations of "Armytage for ever!" Aware of the character of the parties by whom Arthur's nomination had been effected, she exonerated *him* from all share in the intrigue.

But Reginald the Sapient had motives of his own for placing a different conclusion on the evidence. However irritated at having been drawn forth and shown up as a defeated man, without intention or desire on his own part, he resolved to turn his afflictions to account, by assuming the character of a martyr in the cause of Mrs. Armytage. "He *trusted* it would eventually appear that Mr. Armytage had no share in the plots and manœuvres of such a fellow as Gumption. He trusted it would be satisfactorily proved to the world that his young relative was incapable of having coalesced with a blackguard attorney, for the

purpose of enlisting a party in the county against his mother. Family piques and family dissensions he could well understand; but when family piques went the length of blazoning forth to the public every unfortunate ——" he checked himself; he was going too far; he recollected that Mrs. Armytage had been the first to call public attention to the disunion in her family. "But, perhaps," he resumed, in a tone of affected candour, "perhaps, for the sake of all parties, the less said on such a subject, the better."

But Mrs. Armytage's clear understanding was not to be confused by generalities so common-place. *She* knew that, though the least said might be best for all parties, much would be said, and much to their disadvantage. It was a dull season of the year in the country; just that heavy pause which intervenes between the cessation of holiday hospitalities, and the migration of the principal families to London; when winter pleasures are beginning

to lose their attraction, and spring gives no immediate promise of relief; when daylight daily increases, only to give to view the same leafless trees, the same brown fallows, the same sallow turf, which the obscurities of winter so advantageously tended to conceal. She knew, in short, that it was the most disagreeable month of the year, and felt that the recent events at Thoroton would be a god-send to the neighbourhood. The Duchess of Spalding, unblest with a villa near town, was unluckily in the habit of remaining in Yorkshire till after the Easter holidays, though sadly in want of country entertainment. The Wemmersleys, her grace's obedient humble servants, would take care to supply her with a thousand particulars, real or imaginary, of the Holywell disasters, to console her for the defeat of her son. The Rotherhams and Maranhams would be sincerely concerned, the whole Riding would be busy with her family mis-arrangements!

Nor did the conduct of her discountenanced protégé tend to palliate her annoyance. Aware that she had unintentionally ill-used him, she discerned the whole extent of his want of generosity, in his mode of holding up the ill-usage to her sympathy, of parading his bleeding wounds! A man of right feeling would have retired instantly from the field; leaving it to her conscience to reward his magnanimity. But Reginald had no magnanimity. He persisted in lingering on and on at Holywell, looking injured and sullen, in the hope that Mrs. Armytage would recompense him for having been sacrificed to her son, by sacrificing to him her daughter. He did not even choose to perceive how greatly his presence must add to her embarrassments in the event of Arthur's arrival at Thoroton.

And Arthur was daily expected; at least so said the attorney, who had been promising and vowing in his name; and, *if* really expected, dates and comparisons of dates

brought clearly to proof that he must have been a party in all the manœuvres of his political sponsor, Mr. Gumption. Sophia, in the teeth of almanacs and printed addresses, still persisted that the thing was impossible; Mr. Maudsley "hoped," "trusted," and, like Leonidas Lomax, "suspended his judgment;" while Mrs. Armytage waited in silence, but not in tranquillity. Throughout her three-and-forty years' experience of the world, never had her mind been less at ease!

CHAPTER X.

Here easy quiet, a secure retreat,
A harmless life that knows not how to cheat,
With home-bred plenty, the rich owners bless—
And rural pleasures crown their happiness.

DRYDEN.

THOUGH all the world admits that country-neighbourhoods in England are apt to bear a strong family resemblance,—that, with few exceptions, all have their grand family—their *parvenu* family—their pattern family;—their Sir Charles Grandison, or charming young man; their Harriet Byron, or sweetest creature in the world; their censorious old maid; their book-worm, or their bore;—still, each has its peculiar *cachet* and characteristics. The very soil of county and county, parish and parish, does

not vary more curiously than the nature of its human produce.

It is true, mail-coach roads, daily newspapers, and book-clubs, have done wonders to efface this individuality of organization; and the habits of the metropolis have diffused themselves over the provinces with more celerity than may be wholly desirable. The readiness of communication from one end of the empire to the other, precludes all possibility of any nook or corner remaining shut out from the progress of civilization, as we sometimes find the case among the lesser towns of France or Germany. Still there are spots more secluded than the rest—remote from a high road, remote from the manufacturing districts—where the ways are rough and the means of improvement limited; where the land, divided among a few great proprietors, gives no shelter to speculators, and small encouragement to innovation; where human nature remains unsophisticated, and character, characteristic.

And precisely one of these was the neighbourhood of Holywell. Mill Hill was its only duodecimo estate; while the town of Thoroton, situated at six miles' distance, and in a great measure the property of the family of Spalding, Greta, and Armytage, had too recently acquired political independence, to have become fully aware of the purposes of that Hydra-headed power conferred upon it by the liberality of government. Nor had the influences of fashion fallen like a mildew upon the land: distance from the capital, and other causes, conspired to perpetuate a certain old-fashioned quaintness, a sort of oaken-sturdiness of character, nearly extinct in the conventionalized country of newspapers and rail-roads. The Spaldings were at too great a distance to exercise much influence; the Rotherhams were home-staying, unambitious, matter-of-fact people; the Wemmersleys mere dots in the map; and Mrs. Armytage, (fox-hunting excepting), was little else than a

squire in petticoats, a beardless justice of the peace.

But, between Holywell and Spalding Court, precisely as if to form an unassailable out-post of the *cordon sanitaire* destined to preserve the neighbourhood from the contagion of the times, was situated a certain manor house, called The Grange; very little altered in its outward show from the period when John of Gaunt is said to have made it his favourite residence; and not in the slightest degree disturbed in its interior distribution, from the days when Lady Margaret Maranham, widow of the thirteenth Baronet of that name, retired in dudgeon from the fallen court of her gracious mistress, Queen Mary of Modena; pursued even to her dower house on the banks of the Wharfe, by jealousy of the accession of a Protestant dynasty.

Situated on the lowest level of a hollow, whose springs were collected in the moat that protected three sides of the house, thence

to find an unperceived issue towards the river, flowing at the distance of a few hundred yards. The Grange consisted of a low quadrangular edifice of freestone, ornamented by a heavy, disproportionate battlement; with an infinity of tall fanciful Gothic chimneys, apparently running to seed. Facing the main entrance, on the side where a paved court-yard supplied the place of the moat, was a carved screen of stonework, rising to nearly half the height of the principal building, which had been superadded to the Gothic Grange about the reign of First James; while closing in the court-yard, terminated at either side by a turfen terrace, stood a double row of lofty trees;—elms, beeches, sycamores—the down-drooping branches of which swept the grassy embankments of the terrace, while their elevated tops afforded shelter to a colony of woodpigeons, and spread a dense shade upon the walk extending round the court, and crossing the archway of the old stone entrance gate, which

formed a prison-like approach to the ancient mansion-house of the Maranhams.

In the moat might be discerned, from the terrace which at either extremity met and overhung its precipitous channel, a shoal of venerable grey carp, coeval with the abdicated lady-in-waiting of the abdicated queen, disturbed in their lonely haunts only by the rivalry of a pair of veteran swans of unnumbered generations, with whom they waged a sort of half-amicable war—such as the friendly neighbours of an uneventful country-parish are apt to cultivate, to while away the long summer days, and longer winter evenings. In the kennel of the adjoining offices, dwelt a species of obsolete mastiff, a breed partaking of the blood-hound, and peculiar to the place; and in the stables (the stalls of which bore, in worn-out capitals, the names of "Highflyer, "Pastorella," "Miss Prue," "Jew-boy," and "Crocus,") stood at rack and manger, other Highflyers and Pastorellas—great grandchildren of the original tenants of

the place. The oven was larger than the coach-house: beside the yawning kitchen fire-place was the turnspit's wheel;—the great hall was surrounded with a music gallery ornamented with stags' heads,—the uneven floors being tesselated with curious inlaying;—the large Elizabethan windows admitted no air and little light,—far less indeed than the carved doors, shrunken within their shattered lintels;—altogether, there was a degree of quaint antiquity about the place which would have transported to rapture even the molluscous nature of an F. R. S.

Such was the appropriate residence of three venerable spinsters, (like the Manor House, of vast antiquity, but in excellent preservation) co-heiresses of Sir Wolstan Maranham, last representative of one of the first-created English baronetages. The founder of the family was said to be a certain gallant Captain Maranham, who, in the time of King Edward VI. of catechismal memory, or thereabouts, shared

the bitter fortunes of that gallant Admiral, frozen with all his crew off the coast of Norway; and, from the surviving offspring of the weather-beaten sailor, had arisen a race, apparently smitten with the curse of commemorating, in their manners and appearance, the miserable destinies of the originator of their house. With few exceptions, the members of the Maranham family might have passed for statues of ice.

The principal of these exceptions, however, existed in the head of the house, Miss, or as she was usually termed in the neighbourhood *Mrs.* Di Maranham, who, succeeding on the decease of her father, Sir Wolstan, to the presidency of the estate, had adopted at once, as a duty and a pleasure, all the habits and practices of her predecessor. Mrs. Di was a Mrs. Armytage, cast in a coarser mould; or rather, perhaps, what Mrs. Armytage might have been, had not matronhood and maternity chanced to recall her to the softer duties of her sex.

Mrs. Di had found no affectionate Arthur to share *her* destinies; no caressing infants to inspire her with a taste for milder pleasures: her horses and dogs—nay, her kine and her oxen, were all-engrossing favourites; she looked like a groom, and talked like a grazier.

Miss Margaret, the third sister, preserved, on the contrary, all the rigid immobility characteristic of the Maranham family. A chartered invalid, shawled to the teeth, and not allowing even the zephyrs of summer to "visit her cheek too roughly," she sat ensconced during the three summer months of the English year, in a bay-window of the parlour, rivalling, as far as the thickness of its lozenge-glazed casements would permit, the temperature of a modern hot-house; and, during the nine winter months, in an oven-like chimney-nook of the same apartment. Her infirmities, real or imaginary, formed a pretext for avoiding even the limited circle of society frequented by her sisters; and either genuine indisposition, or

the singular variety of distilments and decoctions with which, under the name of simples, she choose to irrigate her fertile field of ailments, certainly imparted a most spectral appearance to features originally feminine and delicate. She was said to have been, in former days, the beauty of the family.

Miss Avarilla, the second of the weird sisters, and (although, "by'r lady, inclining to three-score,") still treated by Miss Di, as a young thing not altogether to be trusted to its own discretion—was a being as rigidly cold and formal as the coldest and most formal of the Maranham kind, yet incessantly perplexed with business—always in a sort of solemn bustle.

Horace Walpole has described the motions of the Duke of Newcastle as resembling "what one might fancy of a man hung in chains, trying to move from one place to another:"—those of Avarilla Maranham resembled what the fancy might conjecture of an auto-

motion wound up to seem in a hurry. Busying herself with the cure of all the souls and bodies in the parish, foundress of half-a-dozen institutions of the kind *called* charitable, corresponding with Dr. Jenner respecting the incubation of cuckoos and the natural history of hedgehogs—with the 'Gentleman's Magazine,' under the name of 'Philalethea,' concerning the Gothic origin of the Latin language—with Pestalozzi, touching the endoctrinization of the naughty little boys and girls on the Maranham estate—with philanthropic Owen, respecting the re-moralization of mankind—and with Professor Achtenmachtengropschkeit of Jena, touching the magnetic origin of the universe—she remained cold, undemonstrative, and inaccessible, as one of the relentless Fates;—dead to society, so called—forgetting the great world, and by the great world forgot: omitting, like Pope's Artemisia,

"To pare her nails and wear a cleaner smock,"

amid the contending interests of foreign and scientific labours.

Although heartily despising Mistress Di as an unintellectualized materialist, Avarilla made it a point of conscience to treat her with the respect due to the head of the family; and, between the conscientious allegiance of the second, and the apathetic acquiescence of the third sister, Diana—chaste, but not fair—maintained undisputed sway at the Grange. Trotting along the high road to Thoroton on her favourite bay, sixteen hands high, with her straight grey hair escaping from a napless beaver, she might have been mistaken for Talleyrand in a riding-habit;—seated in her audit-room among deed-boxes, files of papers, plans, contracts, notices, circulars, and affidavits, she resembled the spectre of her old father, Sir Wolstan—

"Tricked in antique ruff and bonnet!"

And it was amid this cluster of rusty evergreens, that the fairest blossom of the country

was opening into bloom and fragrance. It was at the Grange, surrounded by the reverend Misses or Mistresses Maranham, that Rosamond Devonport was growing into the graces of womanhood; alternately chided and caressed by the three ungainly sisters; cuffed by Mistress Di for a coward; mourned over by Miss Margaret for her wilful self-exposure to sun and shower; and lectured unceasingly by Miss Avarilla for the mightiness of her ignorance, and the smallness of her powers of application. And yet they dearly loved her. All three took pleasure in her cheerfulness, and pride in her beauty; and sooth to say, it *was* as the brightness of a sunbeam, irradiating that dilapidated abode.

But Rosamond, or as she was commonly called, Rose Devonport, was not only the idol of the Grange, but the favourite of the whole neighbourhood; for she afforded a never-failing source of wonder and conjecture to the idle and the garrulous.

Who she was, or whence, still remained a mystery; although for twenty years the subject had afforded a text for scrutiny and commentation to the gossips, maid, wife, or widow, of the adjoining parishes. Somewhat before that period, Sir Wolstan Maranham, a martyr to hereditary gout, had translated himself to be killed or cured at the good city of Bath; and been translated back again two years afterwards to the crowning honours of the family vault; when the three spinsters, his daughters, took possession accordingly of his estate; and dull enough appeared the tenour of their days, until, in the course of a year or two, there suddenly and mysteriously arrived at the Grange, a nurse and child.

Miss Avarilla, the habitual spokeswoman of the family, explained to those whom it might concern, that the little girl was the orphan of a distant relative who had died in the West Indies, bequeathing it to their guardianship. But old Lord Rotherham,

father to the present Earl, who was at that time resident at Greta Castle, and of what *he* considered a facetious turn of mind, swore he was intimately acquainted with every marriage and intermarriage of the Maranhams—every twig of the family tree,—not a leaf of which was blazoned with the name or designation of Devonport; and was fond of insinuating, that the bantling bore a nearer consanguinity to Di, the least starched of the co-heiresses of his friend Sir Wolstan, than comported with her maiden fame (at forty) to avow. For a time the notion gained ground. But when it was seen that Mistress Di evinced not the slightest embarrassment under Lord Rotherham's innendoes, that she made no secret of her affection for little Rose, nor any show of inclination to enlarge upon the child's West Indian origin, people began to give up their chimera. Rose certainly *was* a kinswoman and ward bequeathed to the care of those who had little else to care for; and

even Mrs. Armytage, their dear Mrs. Armytage, the constant object of their regard and admiration, knew no more of Miss Devonport's claims upon their tenderness, than they had chosen originally to announce.

It will scarcely, perhaps, have been implied from the foundership of the family under King Edward of blessed memory, that the Maranhams were adherents to the church of Rome. Yet so it had been, so it was, the ladies were staunch, rather than bigoted, Catholics; and a venerable man, their father's ancient chaplain and their own, resided in a comfortable house within a short distance from the Grange, to minister to their spiritual wants; and among the results of the nonconformity of the family, was the education bestowed upon Rose Devonport in the nunnery at York. Notwithstanding the tenderness of affection with which she was regarded by her guardians, it seemed impossible to Mistress Di, that her young charge could be

trained in the way she should go, otherwise than on the spot, and after the manner that she and her sisters had received their principles of instruction. From the age of ten years, therefore, to eighteen, Rose, except during her vacations, was lost to the Grange. Twice a-year she was welcomed within the old portal; and twice a-year the neighbourhood of Thoroton pronounced that she was fairer and more graceful than ever; and it was a subject of admiration to all that, while her accomplishments were beginning to rival those of Lady Laura Greta and Miss Armytage, Rose Devonport retained the archness and simplicity of a child. Not all the scolding of all her three guardians could subdue her deportment into demureness; and any one might have conjectured from the girlish liveliness alone, that her veins were wholly untempered by the ungenial currents flowing in direct descent from the frost-bitten Admiral.

It was only the winter preceding Arthur

Armytage's unlucky marriage that Rosamond, emancipated from her conventual thraldom, came to settle at the Grange; and Sophia had at present enjoyed little opportunity of exercising her kind and elder-sisterly intentions towards one who appeared at least half a century too young for the place and the people among whom her destinies were appointed. Mrs. Armytage luckily entertained a long-standing neighbourly regard for the elder dames; and from the moment that Rose took her place among them, arrayed in the graces and importance of womanhood, had said to her daughter, "Be kind to that poor girl, concerning whom the Wemmersleys have circulated such unjustifiable surmises." Rose had even once or twice been invited to pass a week at Holywell; although the Misses Maranham, two of whom were too busy, and one too idle, to quit home, would neither consent to act as her chaperons during the visit, nor suffer their precious charge to incur alone the perils

and dangers of eight days passed in such dissipated society as that of their stately friend Mrs. Armytage and her gentle-minded daughter.

Had it been otherwise, had Rose been indeed a frequent guest at Holywell, and the intimate companion of its heir-apparent, the indignation expressed by Di and Avarilla on hearing of his marriage would probably have been attributed, by the malignants at Mill Hill and elsewhere, to the disappointment of a speculation of their own, for uniting Miss Devonport with the richest proprietor of the neighbourhood. But as Rose had scarcely happened to meet with the delinquent from the time when, in childhood, they were occasionally holiday playmates, it was simply inferred by Wemmersley that the elderly spinsters desired to impress by inference, on the mind of the young lady, the madness of a love-match, and the heinousness of disobedi-

ence against the authority of those appointed by law or nature as the governors of youth.

Yet, harsh as they were, Rosamond dearly loved the three crabbed guardians of her infancy. She loved the Grange with all its quaint reminiscences. She loved to muse beneath the overshadowing trees of the old court-yard; she loved the venerable carp, swans, mastiffs, Highflyers, and Pastorellas, who, after every successive absence, seemed to welcome her home. She would follow Mrs. Di on her pony round the farm, whenever that lady's masculine vocations were such as to admit of the companionship of one of her own sex. She would indite letters and copies of letters, if not unweariedly, at least uncomplainingly, to lighten the epistolary labours of the painstaking Miss Avarilla; and, above all, she would place the easy chair, the footstool, the pillows, for the studied ease and comfort of Miss Margaret; and try to entice her out, into

the sunshine of a gay summer's morning, or bring to the dreary table of the hypochondriac all the fairest products of her flower-garden. But Margaret was too apathetic, or too selfish, to requite her attentions, even by a smile. Of the three sisters, she was evidently the one who entertained least affection for her little relative; perhaps because the vivacious movement of the happy, healthy Rosamond reminded her too mortifyingly of her own habitual infirmities, or disturbed the even current of her Lethean blood.

It was on a chilly afternoon in April that the invalid was sitting, apparently dozing, in her arm-chair, her shoulders wrapt in an Angola shawl, her feet covered with a quilt of eider-down; while Rosamond Devonport, who had done her share of duty by reading her to sleep, sat demurely working at her tapestry, just far enough from the log fire roaring in the chimney, to escape actual roasting. Mistress Di had ridden over to Thoroton to ascer-

tain the progress of the election; Avarilla was gone down to the village for the weekly examination of her spinning-school; and nothing but the hospitable practice of the Grange, which forbade all imagination of such a deed as to turn visitors from the gate on the lying plea of "Not at home," prevented the drowsy Margaret from protecting her own departure for the land of dreams, when the hobbling old serving-man entered the parlour to announce that Mr. Wemmersley and a strange gentleman were dismounting in the courtyard.

"A strange gentleman! Rose, my dear,—lay aside your work and go up stairs," mechanically responded the old maiden, rousing herself by a gentle,—a *very* gentle shake. But Wemmersley was already on the threshold, to intercept the movements of Miss Devonport; and no sooner did the half-open eyes of Miss Margaret Maranham rest upon the uncouth person of Mr. Leonidas Lomax, than she involuntarily ejaculated, "Rosamond, you may

remain." The strange gentleman was so *very* strange,—too strange to be dangerous. While Wemmersley was pouring forth his complimentary inquiries after her sisters, his congratulations on the amendment of her looks and the evident improvement of her state of health,—congratulations which he knew to be of all things most vexatious to the habitual invalid,—Rosa could scarcely take her eyes from the square-shouldered, sturdy, ungraceful Carolinian, with his frost-puckered visage, and scrutinizing glances. She did not even notice the significant looks hazarded by Wemmersley at his companion, implying—"Did you ever see such a queer old place?—did you ever meet with a more vapid old twaddle?"

"Mrs. Di rode into Thoroton, did you say?" was Wemmersley's first attempt at conversation. "I trust, then, she will extend her ride as far as Holywell, to console poor dear Mrs. Armytage!"

"Mrs. Armytage!—What has happened to

her?" inquired Miss Margaret, a slight tinge colouring her sallow cheek, and betraying the utmost warmth of sympathy she was ever known to lavish upon the disasters of her fellow-creatures.

"Sophy is well, I hope?" cried Rose, unable to maintain the rigorous silence imposed upon her by the orders of her preceptresses during the presence of visitors.

"Very well, I believe," replied Wemmersley, examining the point of his riding switch.

"And the Captain?"

"As well as can be expected, I suppose."

The sick woman coloured more deeply than before at the expression, apprehending some unpleasant double meaning.

"Has anything occurred to Arthur Armytage?" said Rosamond, unsuspiciously. "Is he returned?"

"By a majority of one hundred and thirty-four."

"A majority?"

"Of a hundred and thirty-four."

"I meant," said Miss Devonport, still perplexed, "to inquire whether Captain Armytage was come back?"

"Not exactly come *back*—he has come *forward*."

"Come forward?" demanded Margaret, with a puzzled look.

"In plain English," interrupted Leonidas, not perceiving the wit of prolonging the mutual misunderstanding of the parties, Mr. Armytage, or *Lieu*-tenant, or Captain Armytage, or whatever the young gentleman calls himself, or is called by his friends——"

"I beg your pardon for interrupting you, Mr. Lomax," said Wemmersley with a grave face, "but his worst enemies never went so far as to call poor Arthur *Lieu*tenant Armytage!"

"We may waive the difficulty, I calculate," replied Leonidas, sneeringly, by calling him, at once, Member of Parliament for Thoroton; for the representation of which loyal burgh

your sapient friend, my Lord Leicester Spalding, has proved a rejected candidate."

"Lord Leicester Spalding defeated? I am heartily glad of it!" murmured Miss Margaret, in her usual feeble voice, but true to the political principles of her family.

"Arthur Armytage elected? I am heartily glad of it!" cried Rose, in a far more cordial tone, but not more cordial spirit. "He must now settle in England; and Sophia's happiness will be complete!"

"Not unless she happen to find particular gratification in witnessing total estrangement between her mother and brother," snarled Mr. Wemmersley, mortified to perceive that the news he had communicated gave pain to nobody.

"Oh! but it will be impossible for Mrs. Armytage to keep up a show of resentment against her son, when she finds herself under the necessity of meeting him constantly, and seeing him well received by all the world!"

"*That* may not tend to smooth matters between them, so long as he is ill-received by herself."

"But, after all, what sin has he committed?"

"Rose — Rose Devonport!" faltered the guardian spinster, interdictingly.

"Married at three-and-twenty, without his mother's consent!" continued Rose, not hearing, or not heeding the imputed injunction.

"A very venial transgression, we may conclude," observed Leonidas sententiously, "in the eyes of a young lady of sixteen!"

"*Eighteen*, Sir, if you allude to myself," observed Rosamond, casting on her strange visiter a look of ineffable contempt.

"Rose! Rose Devonport!" again remonstrated the invalid, raising her withered hand with an air of impatience.

"You cannot surely think," cried Rosamond, turning towards her reprover with a glowing but unabashed face, "that parents have a right to prolong, over persons grown

to years of discretion, all the wilfulness, all the caprice of their authority, in matters of such dear importance as a marriage choice?"

"The authority of parents over a child *cannot* be either wilful or capricious," replied Miss Margaret, with a degree of cold serenity affording a singular contrast to the ardour of her youthful pupil. "But supposing it both, the first duty of a child is submission."

"But, my dearest granny," cried Rosamond, using, in the eagerness of her argument, a term of endearment sometimes permitted by the mild invalid during her earlier years; "you surely do not mean that you consider it the duty of Mrs. Armytage's son, after obtaining the affections of a young lady of good conduct and good family, to throw her off on finding his mother express a vague disapproval of the engagement?"

"I *do*!" said Miss Margaret. But her feeble accents were drowned in Wemmersley's scornful vociferation of "Good family!—Mag-

nificent consanguinity indeed, for one of the oldest Houses in the county of York!—Cousin to some crackbrained Irish Baronet!—her claim to gentility resting, *pour tout potage*, upon her blood relationship to some Sir Emilius O'Moran O'Tasus O'Shaughnessy, of Ballynagibberish, in the county of Limerick!"

"Rose! Rose Devonport!" again ejaculated the invalid. But as Rosamond was neither speaking nor intending to speak, nor even gesticulating the dislike she could not help entertaining for the sneering proprietor of Mill Hill, she could not exactly understand to what, in *this* instance, the disapprobation of Miss Margaret was directed.

"Did you speak? Do you want anything that I can give you?" said she, perceiving that the looks of her enfeebled companion were more wan and miserable than usual.

"No child!—no—nothing.—Go! and see whether either of my sisters be returned. I

am but a poor companion for these gentlemen. I am not equal to conversation, I—I—"

And from the increasing and deadly paleness of her cheeks, Rosamond saw that she had indeed over-exerted herself.

"Come with me into the library to wait Mrs. Maranham's arrival," cried she abruptly to her guests; "we have been talking too loud and too inadvertently, considering Miss Margaret's nervous condition."

She did not even pause, as she led the way into Avarilla's scholastic sanctum, to note the looks of pity and contempt exchanged between her brazen-hinged and iron-nerved guests.

"Thank heaven we have no nervous ladies t'other side the Atlantic!"—was the whispered adjuration of the Rationalist.

"Thank heaven we have got rid of the old lady, even at the cost of a fainting fit!"—was the friendly rejoinder of his amiable nephew. "But what the deuce could so strangely overset her?"

CHAPTER XII.

"You call honourable boldness, impudent sauciness; if a man will make court'sey and say nothing, *he* is virtuous."

SHAKSPEARE.

THE contempt exhibited by the man of the Western world, for the morbid sensibilities of the ladies of the more civilized creation, would have "pretty considerably" increased, could he have surmised that, at this moment, not only the feeble Margaret Maranham, but even the lion-footed Mrs. Armytage was suffering from a disordered nervous system. Whenever a carriage was heard grating on the gravelled approach to Holywell, strange glances kindled in her eyes, in the apprehension that it must inevitably contain the new member for Thoroton. Whenever an eastern gale (and such in a Yorkshire April are of no rare occur-

rence) brought across the park uncertain snatches of certain chimes, she started, as if the church bells could no longer signalize anything more momentous than the arrival of the young M.P.

After having implied rather than expressed to her servants and acquaintances a disinclination that Arthur's name should be uttered in her hearing, she now grew pettish at their servile acquiescence; fancying that every one must be in league to withhold from her even the necessary intelligence concerning the movements of her son. She would have died rather than inquire, even of Sophia, whether any fresh intimations of Arthur's intentions had reached Thoroton; yet still she was dying to ask. Did Arthur purpose to treat her with utter contempt, with utter defiance?—Did he mean to take her by surprise, with a view of forcing her into a reconciliation?—What did he,—what could he intend?—Was he come?—Was he coming?

Alas! the coming of the successful candidate began to appear almost as problematical as the going of the defeated one; while Arthur stayed away, Reginald stayed on; assiduous to his cousin Armytage; thrice assiduous to his cousin Sophia!—On the fifth day following the election, he was about to accompany them from the breakfast-room to the drawing-room, and pursue, by an observation of the N.N.E. of the house, the weather-wise announcements he had been deducing from the aspect of the S.S.W., when the attention of all three was attracted by the sound of approaching wheels; and, for the fiftieth time, Sophy coloured crimson, Maudsley bit his lips, and Mrs. Armytage tried, flurriedly, to look unconcerned, in the conviction that the vehicle advancing towards the portico of Holywell contained no less a personage than him who had been so long regarded as its heir!

In this belief, not one of them chose to move

towards the window, for the verification of their hopes and fears; but each, though pretending to look elsewhere, soon discerned that the expected chaise and four was nothing better than a knowing, natty gig, containing a stranger and his servant—a sporting-looking man, with a sporting-looking servant, and a poaching-looking prick-eared dog, on the look-out between them; or it might be, two servants—or two sportsmen—or three poaching dogs—it was impossible exactly to determine in whom or what the party might consist.

"Mr. Nebwell's clerk, whom I am expecting down about the renewal of the Farringham lease," said Mrs. Armytage, greatly relieved, and resuming her usual dignity of demeanour.

"Rather, the tuner from York," observed Sophia, almost as well satisfied as her mother; "I wrote yesterday to my old friend, Mr. Blowpipe, the organist, to beg he would send one of his people to my piano."

"Piano-forte tuners and attorney's clerks!"

reiterated Mr. Maudsley with amazement. "My dear Miss Armytage, you must be blind: that was the finest horse I ever beheld in harness."

"I did not look at the horse, I was thinking of the man."

"I *did* look at the horse," said Reginald, with a grim smile, "and, therefore, form my conclusion that the *man* was a *gentleman*."

"Why not as easily a horse-dealer?" said Sophia, who made it a point to dispute her cousin's dictatorial decrees.

"Because," interrupted Mrs. Armytage, petulantly, "Mr. Maudsley is probably aware that he is——"

"Mr. Baltimore!" interrupted a footman, throwing open the door; and in bustled the active Jack, the vivacity of whose movements had left old Simmons some quarter of a mile in the rear.

"How are you, Ma'am?—Happy to make your acquaintance, Mrs. Armytage!—Thought

to have been here last night; but the people at the Blue Boar at Thoroton, where I put up, insisted that the road was not good travelling after dark. To be sure, there *is* a devil of a gravel-pit just before you turn into the lodge gates, where perhaps I might have found neat accommodation for man and horse, and if——"

"Sir?" interrupted Mr. Reginald Maudsley, advancing with solemn gesture towards the stranger, evidently with the intention of asking him the nature of his business with Mrs. Armytage, whose astonishment and disgust at the intrusion were sufficiently manifest.

"Mr. Baltimore—the father, I believe, of Mrs. Arthur Armytage?" inquired Sophia, timidly intercepting his movements, but judging it necessary to interfere before further offence was given or taken.

"Exactly!—Arthur's sister, Miss Sophy, I presume?" demanded Jack, in return. "Ay, I guessed as much, by the likeness. And Mrs. Armytage, too—devilish strong resem-

blance to my friend Arthur—might swear to the breed as safely as to a foal of Gohanna's! But I am keeping you all standing," cried Jack, checking himself, and turning with unsuspecting good humour to look for a chair; in which, having coolly seated himself, even Mrs. Armytage was not proof against the frankness of his self-possession. They all sat down, overmastered by his impudence.

"You see, Ma'am," said he, (abruptly repelling the advances of Sophia's pet spaniel, a blemish in whose genealogy the knowing eye of Jack had mechanically detected,) "you see, Ma'am, I have made my way here on a false scent: ran down to Newmarket t'other day, for the Spring meeting, with young Lord Hardup, and was persuaded by Tom Warley and Parson Longodds to push on to Croxton for the first day's running, as Tom's bay filly was——"

Mrs. Armytage no longer repressed her symptoms of impatience; and Maudsley

seemed only waiting her nod, to interfere with the sporting intelligence of her guest.

"——When, as we were journeying it through Grantham at the rate of twelve miles an hour, and turnpikes paid," resumed the reckless Jack, "what should I see placarded in black and white, as large as 'Try Turner's,' on the outside of the Leeds Regulator, but 'Armytage at the head of the poll!' Hailed coachee in a second—pulled up—and in five words made out, to my great surprise, that my son-in-law, whom I fancied to be wasting his time and money yonder among the Johnny Crapauds, was electioneering here at home, among the Johnny Bulls—standing, as the saying is, in hopes of getting a seat. Ha! ha! ha! So, says I to myself—'Are ye there, my hearty?' and instead of keeping to time with Tom and the Parson, I turned in straight to the George, took a chop and a bed, and spanked on nor'ards at daylight, in the High-flyer as far as Doncaster, to my friend Light-

weight's, (a fellow pretty well known, I fancy, in these parts, and as good a jockey as ever crossed a horse!) and after a snack and a pint of Burton that made my ears tingle, he drove me over to Thoroton, where, as I said before, I found I had come eighty miles out of my way, on a fool's errand."

"My brother is still in France," said Sophia hastily, dreading her mother's interposition.

"Ay, so I hear from Mr. Gumption and the other gentlemen of his Committee; and more's the pity," cried Baltimore; "for, as I said to 'em this morning, what business has a young chap with *his* prospects, heir to one of the finest estates in the county, to stay gambling and masquerading among such a set of outsiders as the fellows in Paris, a pack of snobs, that run their sham matches in a sand-pit, and hunt hedgehogs with buckhounds!"

"Have you heard lately from Mrs. Arthur Armytage?" inquired Sophia, almost trembling as she spoke.

"Not these six weeks. Marian used to be a tolerable correspondent when she was gadding about with her aunt Robsey to Cheltenham and Weymouth, Margate and Broadstairs. But Paris seems to have turned her little head."

"You will not regret, then, any circumstance that tends to recall my brother to England?"

"You mean about the election? Not I! As I said this morning to the gentleman at Thoroton who acts as Arthur's factotum,—a knowing sort of blade, that, and seems to have served my son-in-law *con a mory*, as they say in France,—if Arthur Armytage, of Holywell Park, hasn't a right to be in parliament, who has, I should like to know? And, as Gumption observed in answer, the notion of pitting a mettled lad like *him* against such a cream-faced tailor as young Spalding—(whom they blackballed last year at the Cocoa Tree,) or such a spoony as——"

"We ought perhaps to have introduced you

to my cousin, Mr. Reginald Maudsley," stammered Miss Armytage, hazarding anything rather than the personal commentary which was half escaping the lips of Jack Baltimore; and Jack, with an involuntary "Whew!" half arose from his seat, to duck a courteous bow to the defeated candidate, which the defeated candidate returned with a frozen salutation, such as might have done honour to the statue of the *Commendatore* in Don Juan.

But Mrs. Armytage's disgust by this time exceeded all control; and, rising from her seat with an air of dignified impatience, she observed to her daughter—"If this gentleman have anything to acquaint me with, which it is necessary for me to know, you will find me in the library. I have business with Hardywood. Mr. Maudsley, do me the favour, I beg, to remain here with your cousin." And, scarcely curtseying, she withdrew all her majesty from the room.

"Well—upon my honour!" ejaculated Jack,

as the door closed after her, "Royalty is a joke to Mrs. Armytage!"

"You will have the goodness to remember, Sir, that you are in the presence of her daughter," said Maudsley.

"I always heard she was as proud as Lucifer," continued Jack, in an angry voice, without noticing his interruption, "but this beats cock-fighting! What the devil does she take me for?"

"Dear Mr. Baltimore!" cried Sophia, clasping her hands, while the tears stood in her eyes with terror, lest the elevated tone in which he spoke should reach her mother's ears; "if you have the least regard for Arthur, let me entreat you to say and do nothing that may widen the breach between him and my mother. You are already aware that, without intending the slightest disrespect to your family, she greatly disapproved of his marrying so early in life."

"And why the deuce should she?" interrupted Jack. "What had Mrs. Armytage

ever done for Arthur to give her any right to interfere with his actions?"

"She was his *mother*," mildly remonstrated Sophia.

"And a pretty mother to boast of!—I can tell Mrs. Armytage, most people in the county are of opinion that she ought to have given up the Holywell estate to him on his coming of age. Why, the gentlemen of the committee at Thoroton were saying so only this morning; and if *I* were in Arthur's shoes, I would take care to overhaul old Maudsley's will pretty sharply, and make sure that——"

"If you continue in this strain, I fear I must put an end to our interview, which would give me very great pain," said Miss Armytage, mildly; "for, believe me, I have it deeply at heart that Arthur and his wife should be on comfortable terms with my mother, and live among us as they ought. Mamma has been accustomed to great respect from her children,

great deference from those around her; and should any unfortunate contrariety occur just now to incense her against my brother, the consequences might be fatal to his interests. I am sure you are too good-natured, too kind-hearted, to wish to inflame our family dissensions. Let us, on the contrary, all unite and do our best to bring things smooth again. I am expecting Arthur every day, every hour. Do not, pray do not, aggravate any unkind feelings he may harbour against my mother, by relating to him the unfortunate circumstances that have occurred this morning!"

"Miss Armytage, you really humiliate yourself by these concessions," said Reginald, coming forward from the window, at which he had stationed himself, as if resolved not to sit down again in Mr. Baltimore's company. "It is an injustice to your family to——"

"Who asked for *your* opinion, Sir?" cried Jack, fiercely, and with a kindling eye.

"Sir, I am here by Mrs. Armytage's desire, for the protection of her daughter," replied Maudsley, with ineffable disdain.

"The protection of her daughter, indeed! What do you suppose her daughter has to fear? Do you fancy that a sweet gentle creature like Miss Armytage could provoke a man to forget his manners, like yonder old termagant? No, no! Mr. Cousin! your assistance is not wanted; and unless I'm much at fault, you may chance to find yourself kicked out with the young lady as well as with the old borough; at the tag end of the poll, here, there, and everywhere! You understand me?"

"Sir!" cried Reginald, in a voice that seemed to make the breakfast-china, still remaining on the table, chime and jingle—"give me leave to say——"

"I shall give you leave to do no such thing! You have heard my opinion. Make the most

of it, or make me answer for it. 'Rough and Ready!' is Jack Baltimore's motto; and——"

Sophia's tears now literally began to flow; and Jack was pacified in a moment.

"Come, come, my dear young lady," cried he, "I did not mean to say anything to annoy you; God forbid! If my bark has proved worse than my bite, you must pardon a straight-forward, plain-sailing fellow, whose pride is not a little touched by the way his girl and her family have been treated. Give me your hand, Miss Sophia, and I hope we may live to become better friends. I see I must wait for Arthur's return to learn all I want to learn, and know all I want to know; but take this from *me*, meantime, and for as true a truth as that God is above us,—that I had rather ten million times have my child at home again among her brothers and sisters, happy and merry, and roughing it with the rest, than see her matched with the greatest lord in the

land, to be looked down upon, she and her relations, as I see she is like to be, here at Holywell Park."

"No, no, no," cried Sophia. "All will eventually go right; and I shall live to see my brother as happy as he deserves."

Mr. Baltimore shook his head. He was already on his legs; and now began to retreat towards the door.

"You are going," added Sophia, "and I have not yet thought of offering you refreshments!"

"Refreshments?" reiterated Jack, with a significant smile. "Thankee, thankee! Mrs. Armytage's civilities have refreshed me enough for this week to come. I wish you good morning; ay, ay! shake hands, and welcome. I wish you a very good morning; and as to *you*, Sir, I wish *you* better manners, and my service to you."

And away shuffled Jack, waiting for no announcement to the servants, no summons

to Lightweight, no bringing round of gigs; straight to the offices; muttering curses between his teeth, and totally indifferent even to the magnificent range of stabling; even to the incomparable dog-yard and kennelling; even to the capital preserves and stretching woodlands that met his eyes, forming part of the future domains of his dear little ill-used Marian. He had no patience to admire anything belonging to Mrs. Armytage!

CHAPTER XIII.

She, of late, is froward,
Reserved and sad, and vexed at little things;
Which her great soul, ashamed of, strait shakes off,
And is composed again.

DRYDEN.

DURING that day, although Mrs. Armytage maintained the strictest silence touching the extraordinary visitation with which she had been favoured, it was plain that her indignation was overpowering. And yet, at times, Sophia could not help fancying that her mother seemed pleased; pleased, perhaps, to find her vague prejudices against the odious family of Baltimore so fully justified.

But if Tuesday had been unpropitious to the cause of the ill-starred Arthur, Wednesday did wonders in his favour. Wednesday brought the foreign post, and the foreign post a letter

for his mother; which it would be unjust to his first efforts in parliamentary correspondence, to transfer to the dry periods of narrative. Let the new M.P. speak,—as new M.P.s should,—for himself.

"*Rue de Rivoli, April 2nd.*

"DEAR MOTHER,

"I have hitherto refrained from writing to you, solely in deference to what I concluded must be your wishes on the subject. If, therefore, I do wrong in now addressing you, attribute it to my sincere desire of profiting by your judgment, and fulfilling your wishes. You must not suppose that, because I consulted only my own inclinations in an affair so nearly concerning my happiness as marriage, I am indifferent to yours on that or any other subject. But, without wearying you with professions, allow me to come at once to a point of business.

"I have this day received a hurried letter

from a person of the name of Gumption, (whom I think I recollect as a scamp of an attorney, at Thoroton,) stating that, in consequence of old Arable's being raised to the peerage, and a vacancy unexpectedly occurring in the representation of the borough, he had brought me forward and secured my election, 'in his great zeal for my interests, and those of the country;' in short, that he had done his officious best to thrust me into Parliament, whether I would or no.

"This business has taken me altogether by surprise. Conscious that I have deeply offended you, I foresee that I can scarcely stir in it without offending you further. I am aware that you formerly entertained a project of bringing me forward in political life as the representative of our family interest; but it seems probable that your views on this point may have changed with circumstances. My own fortune does not place me in a situation to accept the honours so unsatisfactorily be-

stowed; nor am I desirous that they should be the means of marking to the world the differences existing between us.

"Now, I appeal to your candour, my dear mother, to acquit me of all intention of manœuvring myself into a happier situation; and if it be your desire that I should decline the seat offered, I will seize the pretext of health, or some other equally valid, to excuse myself, to my self-constituted constituency. Your silence will suffice to confirm me in this intention; but if, on the contrary, I receive a word of encouragement from your hand, I own it will infinitely gratify me to return to England with the hope of restoring myself to your confidence and affection. Act, however, in your decision, as if this desire had not been expressed; and whatever your sentence may prove, believe in the unaltered respect of your affectionate son,

"ARTHUR MAUDSLEY ARMYTAGE."

This frank and unanticipated appeal went straight to the heart of Mrs. Armytage. Reserved people are peculiarly susceptible to the influence of frankness; and, reserved or not, there was a vein of generosity in the imperious woman's nature, that glowed with sympathy towards the fine, free, forgiving temper of her son. Within the last few days, Reginald Maudsley's cool, ungenial inaccessibility had put her somewhat out of conceit with the pendencies and expediencies of life; and now that Arthur had proved himself guiltless of all confederacy with her enemies, she was almost ready to pardon him for having been elected in opposition to the candidate of her choice.

"Sophia," said she, addressing her daughter, who sat anxiously watching the expression produced upon her countenance by the perusal of the letter; while Maudsley, who was seated opposite, and equally scrutinising, affected to give his whole attention to the decipherment

of the 'Times'—"I know you are eager to learn the result of your brother's explanations. You will rejoice to find that he has completely vindicated himself of coalition with the plots of Mr. Gumption."

"I rejoice to find that you admit his exculpation, dear mamma," said Sophia, colouring; "for myself, believe me, I never for a moment doubted my brother's innocence."

"*I* did; and am sorry for it; nay, more, *ashamed* of it;" continued Mrs. Armytage; and the word "ashamed" sounded strangely when pronounced by lips so stern as hers.

"It must assuredly afford you considerable consolation under the very awkward circumstances in which you have been placed by the unhappy marriage contracted by my cousin," observed the sententious Reginald, "to find that he has disavowed all intention of entering into public opposition to your views and feelings; for, as his father-in-law, Mr. Baltimore, was observing, yesterday morning——"

"We will not talk of Mr. Baltimore now," hastily interrupted Sophia. "Tell me, dear mother, what are Arthur's intentions about the election?"

"To submit to mine."

"And *may* I ask, what have you decided? Is he likely to return to England?"

"Immediately."

"To take his seat in the House of Commons?" demanded Maudsley, sneeringly.

"To establish himself in *mine*," replied Mrs. Armytage, provoked into saying more than she intended, by the cold-blooded and ill-timed irony of her kinsman.

"My dear, dear mamma!" cried Sophia, seizing and kissing her mother's hand. "You will write to-day and tell him so, will you not?"

"*You* are his habitual correspondent," said Mrs. Armytage, hesitatingly; "and it will save a world of disagreeable explanations, if you undertake the task of expressing my desire

that he should return home without loss of time."

The word "home," thus applied to Arthur, produced a delightful effect on the ears of Sophia: but she resisted.

"No,—mother!—you must write to him *yourself*. Think what it will be for my brother to receive a letter from your own hand, after so many months' silence. *Pray* write to him yourself!"

"If *I* can be of the least use, my dear Madam, as your amanuensis,"—Reginald began.

"Not in the slightest, I thank you," replied Mrs. Armytage, gradually recovering her self-possession. "Sophia is right; it *is* my business to write to my son; I will despatch my letter instantly.—Sophy, my love, while I am in the library, order the carriage to drive over to Greta Castle. I shall request my friend Lord Rotheram to oblige me by announcing at Thoroton, that Mr. Armytage may be immediately expected."

"No doubt he has already communicated his intention to Gumption," said Reginald, curious to discover exactly by what terms of submission Arthur had operated so sudden a revolution in the feelings of his mother.

"I rather think *not!*" said Mrs. Armytage, drily.

"Poor Mr. Baltimore! If he have not yet quitted the Blue Boar, how will he be charmed to learn this change in the prospects of his son-in-law!" persisted the disappointed man.

"Not more than all our friends and neighbours, to find Arthur once more restored to my mother's affections!" cried Sophia; "the Gretas, the Maranhams, the Wemmersleys, all have taken the estrangement so much to heart."

Mrs. Armytage stopped short as she was leaving the room. Sophia had not benefited her brother's cause as she intended by this last observation. Mrs. Armytage scarcely liked to hear that the position of her son excited so

strong an interest among her friends and neighbours.—No doubt many of them had silently adjudged her to be in the wrong!

"Half the mischief that occurs in families," she petulantly observed, "is occasioned by the undue interference of strangers; by the idle habit prevailing in the world of commenting on the business of others, of which we know nothing, and of which, *did* we know anything, delicacy should interdict the discussion."

It was fortunate, perhaps, for Miss Armytage that Maudsley had attempted to make so much of his advantages with his high-minded cousin;—had he left his injuries to be redressed by a *voluntary* effort of her generosity, Mrs. Armytage would probably have confirmed her early intentions in his favour. It had, in truth, been long her dearest desire to make him her son-in-law; but she would not be dictated to, even for the furtherance of projects of her own;—and when, that evening, the mortified Reginald demanded an audience of

her, insisted largely upon the injury already experienced by the Maudsley family at her hands, in her preference of a stranger to his father, and her infructuous election overtures to himself, and seemed to make the hand of Sophia a meed due to the reparation of his wrongs, rather than a generous concession, Mrs. Armytage's pride enlisted itself against his pretensions. She assured him she should leave the decision entirely to the discretion of her daughter.

Nothing less than some very strong excitement would have wrung such a declaration from her lips! so little, indeed, was she in the habit of vesting any right of option in her children, and so strong was the influence of the ruling passion in her breast, that in her conference on the subject with Sophia, these generous intentions appeared to be already obliterated from her mind.

"I have undertaken," said she, ceremoniously, "to lay before you the pretensions

of your cousin Reginald to your hand. As the eldest son of my nearest relative, Sir John Maudsley, no less than on account of the honourable character he has already attained in society, he has every claim to your consideration: when I add that his suit has obtained my fullest sanction, I trust I have said all that is necessary to say on the subject. I have been unfortunate in my recent attempts to promote the interests of my young relative; I trust my aid may be more available in securing his happiness."

"Not by a marriage with your daughter, my dear mother!" cried Sophia. "Believe me, no measure would be more injudicious for all parties. Of all the men I have ever seen, Reginald Maudsley is the one I could least like,—least love,—least honour as a husband."

"*My* opinion, it seems, possesses considerable value in your eyes!" ejaculated Mrs. Armytage. "Far be it from me to exercise *authority* over you on such a point; but I did

hope my judgment might in some degree operate in the regulation of your own."

"Judgment—ah! mother; it is too late to talk of judgment!" replied Sophia.

"Do you mean me to understand, then," hastily interrupted Mrs. Armytage, "that pre-engagement renders impossible the alliance which, for many years past, I have derived so much satisfaction from contemplating?"

"Not an *engagement*. You cannot for a moment suppose I could have taken a step of so much importance without reference to your advice."

Mrs. Armytage's wrath was somewhat appeased by this declaration; but she resolved to make the utmost use of Sophia's mood of submission. "I am to understand, then," said she, "that your objection to this match is personally and exclusively to Mr. Maudsley."

"Personally and exclusively."

"And that, on any similar occasion, I may esteem myself secure of holding a mother's

right of influence over your decision?—that you will not, in short, engage yourself without my approbation?"

"Certainly, certainly! I will do more. I promise you, my dear mother, that no inclination, no preference of my own, shall induce me to marry without your consent. All you have done, all you are still doing for me, all the authority which you derive over my conduct from the laws of nature and of God, demand such a pledge. Do not insist upon my marrying my cousin Maudsley, or any other man objectionable to my feelings, and I leave all the rest in your hands. To your *wishes* I submit the absolute control of my prospects in life."

Mrs. Armytage, no less surprised than delighted, imprinted a kiss on the forehead of her submissive child, ere she proceeded to acquaint Mr. Maudsley with the decision of Sophia. But, even prepared as she now was for the unamiable stiff-neckedness of his ego-

tism, she had not anticipated the insolent reproaches with which her communication was received by her *protégé*, the haughtiness of whose temper was only too unsatisfactorily congenial with her own. She felt herself irretrievably offended; and when the carriage of the indignant Reginald drove forth from the court-yard, his kinswoman hardened her heart with the most indignant resentment against even his contingent claims of succession to the family inheritance. She was more enraged against her graceless favourite than she had ever been against her son.

But while Sophia, elate with the prospect of Arthur's restoration to favour, watched exultingly from the window the final exit of the disappointed Maudsley, the rival at home of her lover and her brother, she did not sufficiently reflect upon the infinite importance of the prerogative with which she had invested Mrs. Armytage. In the triumph of sisterly affection, she forgot that henceforth the control

of her hopes and happiness was delegated to another; that she was no longer, even nominally, the arbitress of her own career! Alas! the first dark page of her destinies was already unfolding!

CHAPTER XIV.

> ———— a learned and a manly soul
> I purposed her, that should with even powers
> The rock, the spindle, and the shears control
> Of destiny, and spin her own free hours.
>
> BEN JONSON.

THE days passed on; and at length, "'twixt sun and shower," arrived the morning which was to welcome back Arthur Armytage to the home of his infancy; or rather, as Mrs. Armytage considered the question, to the residence of his maternal ancestors. Sophia, when she opened her eyes full an hour earlier than usual, rejoiced to perceive that the skies shone auspiciously on the event; and it struck her, when she looked forth from her window upon the noble park-scenery of Holywell, its turf sprinkled over by the first spring daisies, and

its plantations vivified by their earliest tinge of green, that the place had never looked so majestic or so gay before. The waters of the Wharfe were rippling in the sun; the rooks circling hither and thither over the avenues, noisy and busy as the members of a new parliament; the gardeners had attempted their first mowing of the lawns which intersected (as at wood-encircled Dropmore) the groves, skirting one wing of the mansion; all was alive—all cheerful—and Sophia's heart was light within her bosom, as with the lightness of a bird.

She was provoked, however, as the business of the day proceeded, to notice that "the sense of the house" was at variance with her own. The domestics of Holywell, like other ancient corporations, were apt to wax obstinate in their opinions; and the steward's-room having originally settled that Master Arthur was in the wrong, chose to abide by the decree; their mistress might see fit to change her

verdict, they were less versatile; the visit of Jack Baltimore in his "one-horse chay," had stereotyped their protest against their young master's matrimonial alliance. Old Hardywood, accordingly, with whom his lady's will was absolute, was the only one of the household who chose to make the return of the offender an epoch of rejoicing. He invested himself in his yellow-white Marcella waistcoat, girded on his brown-black satin shorts, smoothed down his long white hair, and disposed his feelings for a holiday. But Simmons was sulky; the lame, deaf, and blind ladies of the bed-chamber and still-room put on afflicted faces, inverted the corners of their mouths, and shook their heads whenever Mrs. Armytage came in sight. They would not understand anything; and for all particulars of preparation connected with the expected guests, chose to demand a thousand unnecessary instructions.

Smooth as was the course of hospitality at

Holywell on all other occasions, and arbitrary as old Mrs. Caudlecup's distribution of its chambers and bills of fare, she chose to be told not only what rooms were to be appropriated to Master Arthur and his lady, but where Mrs. Arthur's maid was to sleep, and where the valet. She even took occasion to inquire whether the blue drawing-room was to be got ready as a morning-room for Mrs. Arthur, in case it should not be agreeable to her to breakfast with the family; and was as much puzzled what roast to provide for the second course, "now that game was out, and chickens and ducklings not yet fit for the spit," as if she had not been in the habit of meeting similar exigencies, every spring for her last fifty years of service.

The head coachman, too, chose to understand that he had been ordered to take the set of bays to a post-town at fourteen miles distance, instead of a neighbouring village, enabling Arthur to make his entry into Tho-

roton with suitable honours. The off-leader was accordingly announced to be in physic, and Jem Outrider to be dead lame—or the leader to be lame, and the groom in physic—no matter!—it was some stable catastrophe, intending to prove to Mrs. Armytage the extreme inconvenience entailed upon her establishment by Master Arthur's arrival. For a moment Sophia entertained a project of repairing to the offices and haranguing the factious members thus inopportunely striving to rekindle the embers of discord. But her usual prudent avoidance of all interference with her mother's absolute sway, warned her that she might do more harm than good to the cause; and repeating to herself the oft-repeated axiom, that "Time and tide wear through the roughest day," she retreated shortly after breakfast to her own room, trusting that her mother's attention was engrossed by her usual avocations.

But this was not likely. The event of the

day was a great event to Mrs. Armytage; her conscience and her pride were equally uneasy. She felt that for years past she had acted somewhat harshly towards her only son: that she had excluded him from her confidence, and jealously repelled his participation in the administration of the family affairs. She would have given much for courage to deal more frankly, more generously, with him: but conscious of her own weakness (a king-like susceptibility to the encroachments of her successor), she dreaded to lay aside a sceptre which she knew her feelings would the next moment prompt her to re-assume! Still, Mrs. Armytage hankered after a better frame of mind; still she tried to fan her flickering virtue into a flame. In traversing the picture-gallery at the housekeeper's desire, to inspect the suite of rooms prepared for the young couple, she paused opposite the portrait of her husband—the husband of her youth—the husband of her choice—the father of her children

of Arthur — the confiding, open-hearted, open-handed, reverential husband, who had so readily surrendered all right and authority to the hands of the woman he honoured with his love. It was a spirited picture from the pencil of Gainsborough; full of animation—full of life and health—and full, too, of the peculiarly bland but joyous expression of countenance distinguishing her son. It recalled the days of her girlhood, of her first affections, her first consciousness of perfect happiness: the plighting of her virgin vows, the birth of her first-born child.

Few widows, after so vast a lapse of years, could have gazed with so unaccusing a conscience on the resemblance of their husband. From the day of his untimely death, Mrs. Armytage had, in truth, suffered no living man to produce even a momentary impression on her feelings. But she was not equally satisfied of her blamelessness in the discharge of the great duty he had committed to her hand.

Perhaps she *ought* to have done more for Arthur, and overcome her feelings of resentment against his opposition to her views: but it was not yet too late. Tears rose in her eyes, as, still gazing upon her husband's picture, she felt rejoiced that it was not. She congratulated herself that her son was on his way home—that he would arrive that very day, and went her way to inspect the blazing fires in the chintz bed-room and its spacious dressing-rooms, with a lighter step, and brow less haughty than was the wont of Mrs. Armytage.

Meanwhile, Sophia's reflections, if of a different, were scarcely of a less moving cast. Deep was her reverence for her mother; dear and devoted her sisterly tenderness for Arthur; and the anticipation of their immediate reunion, and the restoration of family peace at Holywell, filled her mind with holy and grateful delight. All, henceforth, would be well with those whom her soul loved!

Like her mother, too, her thoughts were

straying back into the past—to nursery reminiscences—to holiday recollections—to the girlish and boyish projects of herself and Arthur. It had been so often settled between them what wife he was to bring home to Holywell, and how she was to be welcomed; but the *beau ideal* sister-in-law did not, it must be admitted, resemble a Marian Baltimore. A gentle tap at the door at length disturbed her meditations, and Sophia started from her seat at the entrance of her friend Lady Laura Greta.

"Do not let me disturb you," said she, stealing in on tiptoe, and placing herself without ceremony in the seat nearest to Sophia's musing chair: "I dare say you wish me away, I believe I ought not to have come; yet, indeed, dearest Sophy, I could not bear to stay away, knowing how anxious you must be this morning. At what hour do you expect these people?"

"Every minute; we hardly know. A few

hurried lines written by Arthur on landing at Dover, contain all we have learned of their intentions."

"He ought to have written again, knowing, as he does, the tenacity of Mrs. Armytage on all matters of family ceremony. Besides, the Thorotonians are kept in such sad suspense! I have a suspicion they have been in waiting since daylight to be in readiness to draw the new member into town."

"Poor Arthur cannot, of course, be apprized of that."

"No! but from many trifles I have noticed since his marriage (with respect to yourself in particular), I am convinced we shall find him less considerate than he used to be of the feelings of others."

"No—no—I cannot listen to such a prediction!"

"Ah! Sophy! you may rationalize as much as you will, and preach Christian humility, or philosophical equality till you are tired, but

trust me, there is nothing so demoralizing in human nature as the influence of inferior society."

"*That* is one of Lord Greta's notions."

"His or mine, no matter—accept it for a truism."

"First tell me what you mean by inferior society?"

"People without refinement—without enlightenment."

"Refinement is so arbitrary a quality, so wholly dependent on individual views and station."

"In one word, then, I mean low people, such as the Baltimores."

"I thought so; and you judge them prematurely. What do we know at present of the family? Dearest Laura! allow me to hope for the best!"

"Well, well—I dare say I am wrong; at all events wrong to come and plague you about them this morning, when I know you are feeling so uneasily."

"I am, indeed. The events of to-day will probably enable me to form an opinion of Arthur's prospects of happiness in life; and, *if* that opinion should be unfavourable!—such a dear good brother as he is!"

"It is now my turn to say, make the best of it. But you look so worried, dear Sophy, that I hardly like to communicate the nature of my business at Holywell."

"Business at Holywell! Have you any, besides the task of saying a cheering word to raise my spirits?"

"I am come as an ambassadress for my mother. Mamma, in the warmth of her love for me, knowing how infinitely I dislike what is called 'going out' in town, wants to reconcile me to my fate by persuading you to accompany us to London for the season. She promises to take the greatest possible care of you, and so forth; not to torment you to become more dissipated than suits your health and convenience; and to bring you back safe to

Holywell whenever you may choose. You can take your own servants or not, as you will; only papa and mamma are anxious that you should consider yourself completely one of the family.

"How very kind of Lady Rotherham!"—

"Very kind towards her daughter. Oh! my dear Sophy!—*do* say yes! I have set my heart upon your going with us to London."

Sophia coloured to the temples; but said nothing.

For two years past particular motives had inspired her with the most ardent desire to visit London: and she knew there was no chance of persuading her mother to quit Holywell. But she was prudent enough to deliberate.

"I came to consult your own wishes before mamma made her petition in form to Mrs. Armytage," continued Lady Laura, "fearing she might be inclined to urge you to compli-

ance against your inclinations; or to refuse her consent, in case you are inclined to gratify our hopes. So you have only to tell me sincerely your desire, and nothing shall be left unattempted to bring it to pass."

"A thousand thanks!—Pray, then, beg Lady Rotherham, in my name, on no account to mention her kind invitation to my mother—I think she *would* wish my acceptance of so kind and friendly a proposal: but much as I should like the visit I must not just now quit Holywell. I may be wanted as an adviser—as a peace-maker;—I may—"

"That odious Mrs. Arthur Armytage again!"

"Hush!—hush!"

"And you are really going to make yourself a martyr, and sacrifice your prospects and inclinations to a stranger?"

"Not to a stranger; but Arthur's temper is hastier than mine; and many little disturb-

apces may occur at Holywell needing all my influence to pacify. I should be miserable to be away from home just now."

"But mamma will put off her departure for London for a week or ten days, to enable you to smooth away the difficulties of your brother's first arrival."

"Dear Laura! Can you indeed suppose that a week will enable persons of such different ways of living and thinking as my mother and her daughter-in-law, to understand each other, and—"

"And what can *you* do to improve their temper or understanding?"

"Something, at least, to tranquillize Arthur's susceptibility; 'A soft answer,' you know, 'turneth away wrath;' and how could *I* answer him otherwise than softly—I love him so dearly! Hark! I think I hear the sound of wheels—yes!—they are certainly coming!"

"Do not agitate yourself,—sit down; drink

this glass of water!" cried Lady Laura, herself turning alternately pale and red, as a carriage decidedly entered the sweep.

But while Sophia, scarcely able to stand, was summoning courage to go down and welcome the new-comers, Lady Laura Greta exclaimed in a voice half-vexed, half-triumphant—"What a waste of our sensibility!—It is only those odious Wemmersleys and their Yankee cousin, come to offer their congratulations, no doubt, to Mrs. Armytage! Let us leave them to the full enjoyment of their malice. Unless we are summoned to the drawing-room, Sophy, remain here, and conclude our negotiations. I cannot return home in peace till you have assented to mamma's proposal. You must, you really *must* accompany us to London."

CHAPTER XV.

Sweet Willie, the flower of Liddesdale,
Had taken him o'er the saut sea faem,
And now he's come fra' foreign land,
And has woo'd a wife and brought her hame.

And lovely sweet fair Alice was,
And bonnie yellow was her hair;
And happy, happy, might she ha' been,
But his mother wrought her mickle care.

OLD BALLAD.

WHILE their attention was absorbed by the interesting subject of their conference, the visit of the Wemmersleys wore to an end; and even Lady Laura was at length obliged to ring and order her pony-carriage without further tidings of Arthur's arrival.

Sophia grew anxious and fidgety. The sun was streaming down the western avenue, as Lady Laura took her departure. The river and the woods had already assumed their

sombre evening hue. The first dinner-bell rang; the rooks were already at roost; the "sheep were in the fauld, and the rye at hame," but still no Arthur.

Sophia began to tremble. Twice had her mother referred to her son's last epistle; and its hieroglyphics, although in other respects most Etonianly and Parliamentarily illegible, bore a distinct promise, that "On Thursday next, without fail, we shall be at Holywell." The engagement was positive; but its rupture appeared only too probable. Still, the influence of the picture, and of the compunctious visitings to which it had given rise, were all ascendant; and when the turret clock of the offices chimed half-past seven, and old Simmons hobbled in for the fifth time to inquire whether dinner might be served, Mrs. Armyage answered in the affirmative, without any harsher commentary than an order that certain dishes might be kept hot for the travellers.

Sophia now began to dread that, after all his procrastinations, Arthur would make his appearance in the middle of dinner, a meal of some ceremony at Holywell;—and who does not know the awkwardness of such an interruption?—the dining party swallowing their hasty mouthfuls, laying aside their napkins, and hurriedly shaking off the evidence of their occupation — the arriving-party introduced into a room savouring of anchovy sauce, sherry, and divers ragouts, yet protesting, that amid this compound of villainous smells, there is not the slightest effluvium of dinner! There was no cause, however, for alarm: the turbot boiled into wool—the lamb calcined into dust—the cutlets browned to the tint of umber—the much-injured teal—the asparagus beheaded of its verdant tops—were successively removed. Dessert was put on table; and a pine-apple of dimensions to win a horticultural prize, and especially destined by the head-gardener to do honour to the visit of Master

Arthur, instead of adding weight to his own pocket by following its fellows clandestinely to Covent Garden, was remorselessly or unwittingly cut by Mrs. Armytage, although she would not, and Sophia *could* not, taste it!

Then came coffee, and after coffee, tea; and after tea, (dinner having been so unusually late,) came Simmons—officious Simmons! with the bed candles. Yet why officious? Eleven of the clock had struck, and half-past ten was Mrs. Armytage's usual hour for retiring.

"I should think—I should *trust*," said she to her daughter, as she wished her good night, "that they will not come now. However," she continued, turning to Simmons, and the footman waiting to extinguish the lights, "place a supper-tray in the dining-room, and let some one sit up. John, go down to the South Lodge, and tell Martindale it is my desire he should be on the watch till daylight."

It was evident that she had not forgotten her son's last outrageous inbreak upon the sober

habits of Holywell; and Sophy had the mortification to perceive, while watching from her dressing-room window, which overlooked those of her mother, that Mrs. Armytage had retired —but not to rest; till one—till two—till three in the morning, the shutters of one window remained unclosed, from which the crimson curtain was, from time to time, cautiously drawn aside. It was evident that Arthur's arrival was still anxiously expected. Towards morning, however, even the excited Sophia became over-wearied, and throwing herself on her bed, slept to dream of Arthur and his misdoings.

It needs to have been spell-bound in the enthralling chain of ceremony existing in certain formal English country-houses of the old school, to be aware of the importance assigned to a visit procrastinated, or a letter unanswered. In those uneventful Castles of Indolence, where all the excitement is from without, even while the influence of public events is scarcely perceptible, the delaying guest be-

comes a malefactor, and the negligent correspondent a suspicious character. Berlin might have been sacked and burnt, or China depopulated by the plague, and the event would have produced far less sensation at Holywell than the non-arrival of Master Arthur!

On the morrow, too, a transgression on the part of Miss Armytage increased the indignation of the steward's room. Almost for the first time in her life, Sophy was not ready for breakfast, and her mother sat down alone! But the delinquent made her appearance in time to detect the mortified expression of her mother's countenance, when the daily papers were laid on the table, unaccompanied by the expected letter of apology from her son.

An hour or two afterwards, however, old Hardywood, having exchanged his holiday black satins for quotidian kerseymere, claimed an audience of his lady, to acquaint her that the rider of one of the Thoroton tradesmen had just circulated intelligence in the servants'

hall, that, as he quitted the town, Captain Armytage was entering the High Street in a chaise and four—the no longer expectant populace having been unprepared to draw him to the Town Hall!

"They will be here, then, immediately," cried Mrs. Armytage, slightly colouring.

"I rather think not, Madam," mumbled her ancient servitor, "for Lawyer Gumption was with Master Arthur, and I fancy there will be a deal of work for them to do at the Town Hall, before they can push on to Holywell."

"What will become of Mrs. Arthur, meanwhile?" involuntarily ejaculated Mrs. Armytage.

And Sophia, who was at her mother's elbow, as involuntarily replied, "If I were to take the carriage, and go to Thoroton—and—and bring her here at once?"

Sophia was wrong. She should have left so conciliatory a measure to be proposed by

Mrs. Armytage. Anything resembling dictation was fatal.

"I see no occasion for putting ourselves out of the way for those who put themselves so little out of the way for *us*," was her cold reply. "No doubt they will find their way here at their own time and pleasure."

And, in the course of a few minutes, that time and pleasure became fully demonstrated. A French calêche, drawn by jaded posters, looking jaded as only posters *can* look, and smoking as only posters *can* smoke, drew up under the portico—having a courier, half French, half German, half Italian, and a *soubrette*, wholly, entirely, and manifestly Parisian, for its outside passengers—within, a pretty Frenchified little doll of a woman, and an ugly Frenchified little dog of a poodle. Sophy trembled! She would have trembled still more had she been aware that Arthur's rash charge to his wife throughout their hurried

journey from Dover, had been—"Above all things, beware of allowing my mother to perceive that you are afraid of her: unless you appear perfectly free and at ease in her presence, she will fancy that we are secretly resenting the past. For my sake, pray exert your spirits to the utmost."

Fortunately enough, the courier, the femme de chambre, and the poodle, escaped for a time the scrutinizing eyes of Mrs. Armytage, who stood awaiting, at the door of the library, her long-expected daughter-in-law and guest."

"I trust you met with no accident? We expected you yesterday," said she, bestowing a solemn salutation on the cheek of the stranger; when Marian, true to her recently acquired Parisian habits, familiarly offered the other *à la Française*, for a reciprocation of the honour.

"Oh! no; not the slightest accident: the foreign carriages are so safe—so formed for bad roads."

"Bad roads!" Mrs. Armytage regarding it as an established fact that the Great North Road was the triumph of Macadamization, was silent with surprise.

"But I felt a little tired when we reached Wolverfield last night," continued the stranger, throwing herself into the nearest arm-chair which the library afforded; "when Arthur, remembering that the inn at Wolverfield is what is called in England a crack inn, decided that we should stay and sleep, and so we were half suffocated in enormous feather-beds, and condemned to the nightmare by a dinner of eels, veal collops, and wine-sour plums, which, it appears, are esteemed dainties in the county of York."

Mrs. Armytage stood transfixed!

"And after all," continued the inadvertent Marian, "we experienced the horror of getting up at seven o'clock this morning, *entre chien et loup*, in order to gratify the people at Thonoton with the notion that we had hastened our

journey to do them honour; in consequence of which we arrived, *abimés, brisés de fatigue*, and poor Arthur in anything but a humour to do the agreeable to his constituents. *Ah! mon pauvre Mouton! je te croyais perdu!*"—cried Marian to the little monster, which now frisked into the room, and jumped into her lap; while Mrs. Armytage, half resentfully, half despairingly, led forward Sophia to the new-comer, with the simple presentation of—"My daughter."

"*Cela va sans dire;* I knew Miss Armytage at once, so strong a resemblance to yourself," replied Marian, too much frightened to observe that Sophia was as fair as her mother was dark; but still labouring to disguise her own timidity under a mask of assurance. And, while Sophy's advance towards a sisterly salute was sufficiently apparent, she threw herself back again in the chair, and applied herself to her *flacon*.

"I conclude it will be late before we see my son?" inquired Mrs. Armytage, resolved not to be disgusted.

"Yes, indeed. Arthur gave me to understand that I should see no more of him till dinner-time."

"And he gave no message?" observed Mrs. Armytage, half interrogatively.

"Nothing but his kind love to all at home."

"No appointment about sending the carriage for him?"

"None at all. I heard him settling it with Gumption and a lawyer's-clerk, (the clerk, I believe, of Nebwell, your solicitor,) that they would come on together."

"Come on? I do not exactly understand," said Mrs. Armytage.

"To dinner. I heard Arthur invite them all to come and dine with him."

"There must be some mistake," faltered Sophia.

"No, no mistake. I heard Arthur say, 'You must come and eat your mutton with me,' or some such words. *Couche-là: couche donc, mon petit Mouton!*" continued Mrs. Arthur,

addressing the poodle, who was munching off the tassel of a sofa cushion. "If there *is* a plague on earth, it is a lap-dog."

"If there is a plague on earth, it is the vulgar wife of one's only son!" might, perhaps, be the secret response of Mrs. Armytage.

"By the way," resumed Marian, as if struck by a bright idea, (her courage, like that of Macbeath, being nearly 'run out;') perhaps I had better go and see after Célestine and the things. It is quite shocking how foreign servants get imposed upon. You have no notion how horribly they were cheated on the road!"

"As you are now among my own people," observed Mrs. Armytage, with dignity, "I trust further precaution is needless."

"Oh! one never knows! Only last night, at Wolverfield, they stole Ladislaw's case of cigars. And such a bill as they brought in, the moment they found it was for Mr. Armytage, of Holywell Park, the new mem-

ber for Thoroton! One would have thought poor Arthur was come to take possession of his family estate, instead of a seat in parliament! I used to think uncle Robsey's bills at the Plough, at Cheltenham, beat anything; but this was ten times worse, really *à faire frémir!* Three and sixpence for Mouton's supper!"

"I think you said you would like to see your room?" interrupted Sophy, judging it prudent to anticipate the explosion of her mother's wrath.

"Oh! no ceremony, thank you, I dare say I shall find my way. I have so often talked with Arthur over the plan of the house at Holywell; and settled it where we should be, when we came to stay with you," replied Mrs. Arthur; pausing at the door, to whistle to her dog, ere she disappeared from the wondering eyes of Mrs. Armytage.

Having conducted her strange, her very strange sister-in-law to the chintz bed-room,

Sophia disappeared also. But, had she returned half an hour afterwards, she would have been struck with a strong vapour of ether and eau de Cologne, and the agitated demeanour of Mademoiselle Célestine; for Marian, pale as death, was lying on the bed, half fainting and wholly exhausted by her ill-advised exertions! Her only consolation, poor soul! lay in the persuasion that she had played to admiration the part of excellent dissembling, of self-possession and dauntlessness, imposed upon her by the misjudging Arthur. She trusted she had at once done her duty to her husband, and imposed upon her imposing mother-in-law.

CHAPTER XVI.

> What correspondence can I hold with you,
> Who are so near, and yet so distant too?
>
> *From* MARTIAL, *by* STEELE.

MRS. ARTHUR (for the future we must be permitted to adopt this convenient abbreviation) had mistaken the intentions of the one as completely as she had mistaken the character of the other. In due time arrived a note of apology and explanation from Arthur, informing Mrs. Armytage that "being under the necessity of dining with his constituents at the Blue Boar, he should not have the pleasure of seeing her till night; and begging, in case he should be detained by the convivialities of the evening, that she would not break through her usual regular habits on his account."

"I was sure there was some misunderstanding," cried Sophia, after perusing the note. "I was satisfied, my dear mother, that Arthur could never have dreamed of introducing such a person as Mr. Gumption at your dinner-table."

Mrs. Armytage was about to reply, but suddenly checked herself. The rejoinder, thus repressed, evidently regarded her daughter-in-law; for Sophy had already noticed her mother's determination to give no expression to her feelings on that head. She had not made a single remark on Mrs. Arthur; and Sophy rejoiced that she was spared the pain of defending so unpromising a cause.

Dinner-time came, and with it the French maid, with a request that her lady might be excused from the ceremony. "Madame was fatigued, and lying down." Mrs. Armytage's clouded countenance darkened to a still deeper shade. Fine-ladyism in every shape was her aversion; but in the shape of preten-

sion and vulgarity, and in her own daughter-in-law, insupportable.

Dinner-time passed, almost in silence; and after dinner, Sophy went up to the dressing-room of the invalid, in the hope of persuading her to join the family party. And such was evidently Marian's intention; but no sooner had Sophia cast her eyes on the figure emerging from the hands of Mademoiselle Célestine, than she almost repented her mission.

"Will you not put on a shawl?" said she, contemplating with a blush the Parisian costume of Mrs. Arthur, and recollecting with pain the disgust entertained by her mother towards all the varied vagaries of modern fashion. But Mademoiselle Célestine instantly negatived the shawl; a shawl would '*écraser les jolis nœuds de Madame.*' And down went Marian, leaning on the arm of the simply-attired and graceful Sophia; tricked out in all the fopperies which, during the last six months, custom had rendered natural to

her; but entertaining no suspicion that the trifles she had seen in daily use, till they appeared indispensable, could seem monstrous and unprecedented in the eyes of the Yorkshire Volumnia. Mrs. Armytage gazed upon her for a moment, as she would have done upon an overdressed doll; then turned away her head as if resolved never to look at her again.

"You spent a pleasant winter at Paris?" inquired Sophia in a low voice, dreading the continuance of the dead silence which ensued.

"Ah! delightful,—charming!—never was anything so gay. As I was saying to Arthur this morning, the country will appear horribly dull after all our dissipation."

"I trust not; we have a great deal to show you in the neighbourhood. Besides, you must need a little rest after so much gaiety."

"No, indeed; I am never tired of pleasure. With my aunt Robsey, I was so accustomed to rattling about! Lady Arabella

Quin used often to say at Paris, that she saw I was a rake at heart."

"Lady Arabella?" involuntarily demanded Mrs. Armytage.

"Lady Arabella *Quin*. Do you know her?"

"I have not that honour," replied Mrs. Armytage, with significant emphasis.

"Ah! then, some day or other I must introduce you to her. I am sure you will like her, such a charming creature! Such a fine flow of Irish spirits!—We lived in the same hotel, and I went everywhere with her."

"You were peculiarly fortunate!"

"Most fortunate!—Lady Arabella is one of those people who know everybody. Her house is the resort of all the *corps diplomatique*, and foreign travellers. Not a thing occurs in the most remote corner of Europe but you may hear of at Lady Arabella's.—And then all the ministers are at her feet. Old Talleyrand comes and plays dummy whist with her; and Pozzo di Borgo has an audience

every morning. I often used to tell Lady Arabella there would be scandal about her and Pozzo."

"Lady Arabella must have become hardened, as the heroine of scandalous adventures," observed Mrs. Armytage. "Five-and-twenty years' experience is a somewhat long noviciate."

"Oh! you mean about that Sicilian Prince, with whom people said she eloped from Naples.—Never was anything so shameful! I do assure you old Quin was travelling with them all the time. Only, to be sure, he went in the rumble, and Cagliabecchi inside. But it was not Lady Arabella's fault if her husband preferred the company of her maid."

"I am not surprised at his preferring *any* society to that of the most dissolute woman in Europe."

"Most dissolute woman in Europe!—Surely you do not mean what you say?" cried Marian. "But I know people who have lived all their

lives in England are apt to be so very prejudiced! There's papa, for instance, who used to tell us when we were children, that all the French people lived upon frogs; and I declare when I was in Paris we could get them for dinner but once; and that was in a *vol-au-vent* at the Rocher de Cancale, which cost us a Napoleon: and so much for English prejudices!"

"I understand from my brother that you are very musical?" said Sophia, hoping to change the conversation.

"Oh! yes,—I doat upon music! I think Arthur told me that you play yourself?"

"I sing a little;—I am no great performer," replied Sophy.

"I suppose you can have had no advantage of masters down here; and I understand you never go to town?"

"Very rarely."

"Poor thing!—What a pity!—Mamma could have recommended you a capital sing-

ing master who attends my sisters;—quite equal to Scappa; and only half-a-crown a lesson."

"I took a few lessons of Pasta, when I was last in London," said Miss Armytage.

"Oh! Pasta's style is quite gone by, now. No one thinks any thing of Pasta at Paris. Grisi is twice as popular. We used to have the most capital little music parties every Sunday evening at Lady Arabella's;—Rossini, Bellini, Mariani, Rubini, Santini,—just everybody you can think of; even Maupam, the new man who writes the 'Dance of Death' symphonies, with accompaniments of pick-axes and spades. Never was any thing so amusing!—At first, Arthur hardly liked me to go, because of its being Sunday. But then, you know, as there was no Opera on that night, it was so particularly convenient to Lady Arabella and the professors.—Is that a good piano?"

"It is thought to be one of Broadwood's

best," replied Sophia. "It was a present to me from Arthur on my birth-day; I hope you will try it to-morrow and give me your opinion."

"Oh! don't expect *me* to like it. I can't bear any instrument but Herz's or Petzold's! —Petzold's last, with the organ stop and flageolet, and drums for military symphonies, are the most perfect in the world. Lady Arabella wanted Arthur to buy me one; but, as he said, where had we got to put it?— So, all things considered, I determined to wait."

"You have probably brought over a store of new music, which will be quite a treasure in this part of the world?"

"Yes; lots of new music!—A set of Mazurkas, written on purpose for me by Musard. You will see on the title-page, 'Respectfully dedicated to Mrs. Arthur Armytage, of Holywell Park.' I had Holywell put, because there are so many Mrs. Armytages. Lady Trom-

bone has got a Mrs. Armytage for her nursery-governess; and Lord Wyndham Spalding swears that the housekeeper at his father's place in Ireland, is a Mistress Armytage. But I know he only used to say so to plague Arthur. By-the-by,"—she continued, after a moment's pause,—"I suppose you know Lord Wyndham Spalding? 'Winsome Wyn,' as they used to call him at Lady Arabella's. Is'nt he a charming creature?"

"Lord Wyndham Spalding is less in Yorkshire than the rest of his family," replied Sophia. "We are very little acquainted with him."

"Oh! but he will be here often enough now *we* are come; for he is a great ally of ours,—of *mine* I should say, for Arthur thinks him a puppy."

"It is well that my son judges him so leniently," said Mrs. Armytage, sternly. "By the rest of the world he is considered a *mauvais sujet*."

"Oh! but that is all over now. Wyn means to become a reformed rake. His father has promised to book up for him, and for the one-and-twentieth time, is going to pay his debts. It was a lucky thing for *us;* for he had persuaded Arthur to put his name to bills for him, and all sorts of things."

"I should have scarcely thought Lord Wyndham Spalding a person likely to suit my brother," said Sophia, mortified by all she was hearing.

"I don't know about suiting; but they lived with the same set of people, and were always hurdle-racing together in the Bois de Boulogne, or losing their money together at the Club, or playing the fool together at the *bal de l'Opéra.*"

Mrs. Armytage groaned aloud.

"But as I said before, all *that* is over now. Arthur has got into Parliament, and Winsome Wyn has got out of his scrapes; and they are going to settle down soberly into Yorkshire

Squires. Lord Wyndham has promised to introduce us to the neighbourhood, and to get me into his mother's exclusive set."

"Sophia, my dear, you will do me the favour of entertaining Mrs. Arthur Armytage," said the over-excited Lady of Holywell, to whom the very name of the Duchess of Spalding was poison, suddenly rising to retire for the night. "I have some letters of importance which require my attention." And, with an assumption of dignity worthy of the immortal Siddons, she quitted the room.

But was her attention likely to be engrossed by letters of importance, even had their consequence been vital to the peace of the nation? Was her rest likely to be more placid than that of the preceding night? Alas! long before her disordered feelings had become subdued to even temperate heat, there was the tumult of a fresh arrival, and of a disagreeable scuffle on the stairs. Ladislaw, in French, German, and Italian, and John the footman,

in still more exquisite Yorkshire, were persuading the new member for Thoroton, that the best thing he could do under existing circumstances was to allow them to put him to bed.

But poor Arthur's brain, long accustomed to the thin potations of France, was completely volcanized by the floods of Blue Boar port, sherry, and punch, by which he had been deluged in the popular cause. And the last sounds heard by Mrs. Armytage as she closed the double doors of her dressing-room and bolted herself in, were—"Shall I tamely submit, Gen—gentlemen, free and independent elect—to—tors of Thoroton: I say, shall I t—tamely submit to the innovation, the—the aggressions of the hon—honourable gentleman opposite in the fustian jac—jacket, with the red face and Stentorian lungs?—'*Parturiunt montes*'—Gen—gentlemen electors, as we say in the House—'*Parturiunt montes, nascitur rid—rid—ridiculus mus!*'"

"Better go up quoitly to bed, Surr: Missus 'll be quoite froighted," interrupted John, coaxingly.

"Missus! who the deuce is Missus?" stammered Arthur, staggering against the wall. "I rise to explain that I have no Missus—that I admit no Missus! Mr. Speaker! I say, I accept no Missus—'*Timeo Danaos dono ferentes*' as we say in the House—'*do—do—dona ferentes!*' Upon my soul and body!—*do—do—na ferentes!*"

Fortunately, nothing further was audible in the gallery. On entering the corridor leading to the chintz-bed room, canny Yorkshire discreetly closed the folding doors behind the young Squire and his misdemeanours.

CHAPTER XVII.

It is our duty not only to scatter benefits, but even to strew flowers for the sake of our fellow-travellers in the pathways of this wretched world.

CHESTERFIELD.

WITHOUT waiting for "sermons and soda-water the day after" his escapade, Arthur had just strength to rise and make his way at an early hour to Sophia's dressing-room; and, in the happiness of meeting his dearly-loved sister, all his vexations, headaches, and qualms of conscience were forgotten.

"And now, dearest," cried he, after having expressed a thousandth part of his joy at the re-union, and slightly alluded to the intemperance to which he had been most reluctantly compelled by his stanch adherents, the faction of the Gumptionites—"tell me candidly, how

did my poor little wife get on with my mother?"

"Not, perhaps, quite so well as if you had been present to bring them together," replied Miss Armytage; "in a few days, no doubt, they will understand each other better."

"Ah! I see how it is—I knew how it would be!" replied Arthur, in a mortified tone; "poor Marian's excessive timidity has made an unfavourable impression. My mother has found out how dreadfully the poor girl stands in awe of her."

"Indeed, I think not," was Sophia's involuntary reply.

"The truth is, that poor Marian's shyness amounts to an actual infirmity; and the more she mixes in the world, the more it seems to grow upon her. To hear the sound of her own voice is quite a martyrdom to her!"

Sophia had heard of the proverbial blindness of husbands, especially towards a young and pretty wife; but she was not prepared to

find her quick-sighted brother so soon and so completely a dupe.

"She did not strike me as *particularly* shy," was all that candour would allow her to reply.

"Poor little soul! I assure you I had the greatest difficulty in forcing her into society in Paris; and when there, it was evident that she was on thorns. *Here*, however, I did hope she would feel more at ease; as I have never ceased to impress upon her mind, my dear Sophy, how much she has to expect from your protection and kindness."

"And sisterly affection," added Miss Armytage warmly. "But to say the truth, I fear she will have difficulties to encounter with my mother."

"I know it, my dear child—I know it—and so does she; and that is the very reason why you see her so overawed in my mother's presence."

"And then that unlucky visit of her father's!"

"Jack Baltimore? Heavens and earth! Has *he* been here? What unlucky wind blew him to Holywell?"

"Unlucky, indeed; for he has irrecoverably offended my mother. However, it was only natural that, believing his daughter to be here, he should be anxious to see her after so long a separation."

"Then most assuredly we shall see him here again, for he is now aware of our arrival; and, under all the circumstances, I was obliged to refuse Marian the pleasure of a visit to her family as we passed through town. We had only time to change horses."

"I hope you will be able to prevent his coming," observed Sophy, earnestly. "Indeed I cannot help thinking that his interview with my mother will secure us from his return. Nothing could be less encouraging."

"I hope she was not rude to Baltimore?" inquired Arthur, gravely. "He is a rough

diamond, it is true, but a sterling one. Baltimore has excellent qualities."

"You will admit that he has very disagreeable manners?"

"He is not a fine gentleman, I grant you; but in former days, fine gentlemen were not the fashion at Holywell."

"Mr. Baltimore appears so common, so uneducated?"

"He is no pedant, like my mother's darling, Reginald Maudsley; but he is quick, and has considerable knowledge of the world."

Sophia saw that it was useless to argue with a man so prejudiced as her brother; she, therefore, proposed that they should avoid the danger of keeping Mrs. Armytage waiting for breakfast.

"She won't expect Marian to breakfast with us, I hope?"

"Indeed I think she will."

"Quite out of the question! Marian is just

now so very delicate, that the Paris physicians have expressly interdicted early rising."

"Let us hope that the Yorkshire air will do more for her than the Paris physicians," was Sophia's rejoinder, as she accompanied her brother to the breakfast-room.

The brow of Mrs. Armytage was knit when they entered; but the cloud dispersed as soon as she found herself folded in the arms of her son: nature prevailed! And then, Arthur's apologies were uttered so frankly, and so cordially; his inquiries after herself were so warm from the heart; the expression of his hopes that nothing would ever more occur to disturb the happy understanding of the family were so genuine, that his mother's more generous nature was touched. She pressed his hand affectionately, and begged that the past might be forgotten.

During his absence, of nearly a year's duration, Arthur had gained much in personal advantages; a more decided manner, a more

independent frame of mind. He was the image of his father; but eminently his father's superior in manners and address. Mrs. Armytage gazed upon him with proud admiration, as he took his accustomed place opposite her at the breakfast table; and was quite ready to forgive Mrs. Arthur the delicacy of constitution, real or imaginary, which made it indispensable for her to drink her chocolate in her own room, so she might for a time dispense with her company. In her love for Arthur, Mrs. Armytage felt indulgent even towards Marian.

But in the course of the day, a new cause of offence arose. The fatigue of her journey, and the agitation produced by her first introduction with her husband's family, were said to have operated so severely on her health, that Arthur, after a prolonged visit to Marian's apartment, requested the family apothecary might be summoned. Now the "family apothecary" at Holywell implied a very worthy practitioner living at Thoroton, who never *did* attend the

"family." The steward's-room, with its lame, deaf, blind, and intemperate, had occasional recourse to his services; more especially after the broaching of a new twenty-years-old butt of October, or a visit from the Rotherhams and their people. But to the moderate, active, vigorous Mrs. Armytage, the very notion of his attendance, and the arrival of a daily basketful of pink pill-boxes, and salmon-coloured draughts, was a preventive remedy.

Involuntarily she shut herself into the library when she knew that Mr. Senna was picking his stealthy sick-room-like steps towards her daughter-in-law's apartment; and when Arthur announced, after his departure, that his wife was seriously indisposed, would require the greatest care, and daily attendance, Mrs. Armytage became confirmed in her previous opinion of both physician and patient. She proposed, indeed, a visit of inquiry and condolence to the invalid; but Mr. Senna's last injunctions had been that she should be suf-

fined to see nobody; she was to be kept perfectly quiet.

The remainder of the day, and part of the following, were of necessity devoted by Arthur to the completion of his electioneering business; and on his return, Marian appeared so much worse, and was pronounced to be so much worse by her medical attendant, that nothing less than sending off an express to Doncaster for further advice would satisfy the anxious husband.

But when the eminent practitioner who attended the summons, an authority which not even Mrs. Armytage could venture to impugn, pronounced that the sufferer was not only seriously ill, but the life of her expected child imminently endangered, the lady of Holywell could scarcely forgive herself her former unbelief, or Arthur his remissness, in not acquainting her with the real state of the case. Marian now acquired a wholly new position in her sight. The future heir,—the

new Arthur,—the Armytage to come,—formed a link connecting her indissolubly with the family. The question henceforth was not to resent her faults or failings, but to amend, or at least, conceal them, from the world. But of what avail to concert future measures? Marian's life was said to be actually in peril. There was not a more solicitous inquirer after every change of symptoms than Mrs. Armytage.

Youth, however, will do much; and judicious attendance and perfect tranquillity soon restored the invalid to more favourable prospects; it was pronounced that, with great care, and perfect repose, she might go on well. And now came the worst trial: for a second journey in her present weak state was impossible; and Arthur was under the immediate necessity of attending his duties in Parliament. Thoroton could not forego its claims upon its new member—it was plain, therefore, that Marian *must*.

The *first* circumstance that impressed Sophia

Armytage with a really good opinion of her sister-in-law was the gentleness with which she submitted to this thwarting of her wishes. Eagerly as she desired to visit her family; averse as she was from being left alone with that of her husband; deeply, feelingly, as she was grieved by the prospect of parting at such a moment from Arthur, nothing could evince a more amiably unselfish disposition than the mildness with which she acquiesced in the plans imposed upon her. From that time, Sophy gave herself up without reserve to study the comfort and happiness of her new sister. Even with Mrs. Armytage, Marian now began to feel herself in some measure at home. Lying quietly and silently on her sofa, she could give no further offence; and her youth and prettiness, under such circumstances, failed not to plead in her favour. The obligingness of her disposition gradually became manifest to her new relatives; and by the time Arthur

had been gone a week, in spite of the poodle and the French maid, she was almost a favourite.

It had, in fact, been said in a few fluent words, and with so careless a smile to Marian, that, as the session was likely to be short, —scarcely of six weeks' longer continuance,— she had very little to regret in the medical sentence, which compelled her to remain in Yorkshire, while her husband was sojourning at Grillon's Hotel,—that she felt it would be indecorous to express a contrary opinion. Nay, when Arthur himself joined in the assurance that "Six weeks would pass as a day," she actually tried to believe him. It was not till he was gone, and she could contrive to be quite alone, that she allowed a free course to her solitary tears, and to her feeling that she was very miserable; not perhaps the *less* miserable that her husband seemed to make so light of their separation.

The truth was,—but a truth of too ungra-

cious a nature to disclose to Marian—that the regret he experienced in parting from his kind-hearted and loving little wife, was almost counterbalanced by his satisfaction at any pretext for prolonging her separation from the Robsey tribe, and the Jackishness of her father's establishment. He fancied, too, that thus left alone with his family, they would insensibly amalgamate; that Marian would learn to respect his mother and love his sister, as he himself loved and respected them; while Marian's better qualities could not fail to secure their affections in return. Perhaps, too, the occupation afforded by his new duties and a something of attraction in the prospect of one more bachelor spring at a London hotel tended to facilitate the sacrifice of Marian's society.

He did not consider, and even Marian herself was at first scarcely aware, how wearily and slowly pass the days, every hour of which is devoted to an especial and distant object.

That third week in June on which it was humbly hoped by the denizens of his gracious Majesty's Lower House, that their patriotic labours would be ended by the merciful interposition of the King, engrossed every thought of her mind. Till then, all must be a blank. She still trembled when in the presence of Mrs. Armytage; still entertained a reverential feeling for Sophia, as towards the lioness's whelp; and with the heart-sickness of discontent, began to find even Mademoiselle Célestine and Mouton importunate and insupportable.

The neighbourhood, too,—the hospitable neighbourhood — was just then completely broken up: no one remaining but the Maranhams, who were rare visitors, and the Wemmersleys, who were unwelcome ones, at Holywell, while Marian's feebleness prevented her from enjoying any active country diversion. A slow drive with Mrs. Armytage in her pony-chair, round the park, or a dull saunter

with Sophia round the still leafless shrubberies, was her utmost stretch of exercise.

It was a backward spring; the scene was cheerless; and Marian could not conceal her regrets for the cheerfulness and movement of Paris.

"It was so very provoking to be obliged to come away, just as the Tuileries were coming into beauty!"—she exclaimed one day to Sophia, having returned from a country airing along the high road, where nothing but milestones and market-carts were visible; and unaware that Mrs. Armytage was still in the room. "The climate of Paris is certainly a fortnight earlier than that of London, three weeks than that of chilly Yorkshire. I assure you, Lady Arabella and I had begun to sit out of doors before I left Paris; and I was longing to see the orange-trees brought out, and the lilacs and chestnuts in bloom."

"But you will see lilacs and chestnuts in

bloom at Holywell; and when an orangery is placed in the cedar-garden, I assure you it makes a very respectable appearance."

"Yes, for Yorkshire, and in the month of July, when one has grown tired of looking at green trees; but, at best, so very inferior to those fine old Bourbon trees, four hundred years old, with the gay groups sitting chatting and flirting round them, and all the world full of life and animation!"

"The scene possessed the charm of novelty to you," replied the sober Sophia. "Rely upon it you would have soon been tired of Paris, had you remained there longer."

"Oh! no, indeed;—it is impossible to grow tired of Paris. Lady Arabella has been there fifteen years, and likes it better every season. She says it is the post-house where all Europe change horses; and that, in the course of a year or two, you see the whole round of your acquaintance, in the pleasantest way; for they

seldom stay long enough for one to become bored by them."

Miss Armytage, aware of her mother's insurmountable objection to the word "bored," now became aware, by a certain impatient movement at the further end of the room, that the rigid purist was present. She strove to change the turn of conversation; but Marian would not be checked.

"And then, in Paris, one has so much more real comfort with so much less fuss and ceremony! Instead of sitting down to a stately dinner, with half a dozen servants to stare you out of countenance, you dine *en cabinet* at some *café*—the *Rocher* or the *Frères Provençaux*, twice as well, and at the hour you like: after which, instead of boring yourself with a dull evening at home, you scramble to one of the ten theatres, with the certainty of being amused."

"I fancied that the society of Paris did not

frequent the *cafés* and the *petit spectacles?*" said Sophia.

"Oh!—I don't know. Lady Arabella used to go to them all; and I conclude she knows what is proper. Besides, the English are privileged, and do all sorts of things. They are always getting caricatured as *La famille Anglaise*. There was one came out of Lady Arabella eating slices of melon on horseback at Tortoni's door, that would have made you die with laughing. Wyn Spalding sent it to her, *pour ses étrennes*, on New Year's day."

Sophia perceived with delight that her mother had now quitted the room. Such was Mrs. Armytage's progress in the art of toleration towards Marian's little fallings. Resolved not to be more disgusted with her than she could help, she now closed her eyes or ears, or absented herself, when she found that Mrs. Arthur's want of tact was endangering her forbearance; for Marian was a very important object in her eyes. That epoch to which the

young wife looked forward as destined to reunite her with Arthur, was a moment of no less auspicious promise to Mrs. Armytage, as likely to afford an heir to the vast estates of Holywell—to exclude Reginald Maudsley at once and for ever!

She recalled to mind every preparative to which the expected birth of her own Arthur had formerly given rise:—the bonfires on Holywell Hill—the beacon on Holywell Tower—the ox roasted whole in Holywell Close—the labbouring families feasted at Holywell Cross; and secretly promised herself that all this parade should be revived for the arrival of the new heir. The whole neighbourhood should see that she experienced no mortification in the alliance formed by her son. Ale should be brewed, and acres of oaks planted, for the future benefit of her children's children, and the glory of Holywell. Marian was no longer the daughter of a Jack Baltimore—she was the wife of Arthur Maudsley Armytage, of

Holywell. She would meet the sneers of the Wemmersleys with a smile; and defy even the impertinence of her county rival, the insolent Duchess of Spalding,—a proposed intimacy with whom was, after all, one of the worst offences of her daughter-in-law, in the eyes of Mrs. Armytage.

CHAPTER XVIII.

Were I a man,—a Duke,—
I would remove these tedious stumbling-blocks.
Being a woman, I will not be slack
To play my part in fortune's pageant.

SHAKSPEARE.

THE offending Duchess belonged to a class of women rare in our own times and country, though not unfrequent at the more troublous epochs, or in less tranquil lands; who, born to no earthly business, make the business of the whole world their own. Not that she was endowed with the far-sighted spirit of intrigue of a Princesse des Ursins—not that she boasted the coarse but vigorous energies of a Sarah of Marlborough—or even the persevering cunning of a Madame de Maintenon;—but she had all their activity—all their art in esta-

blishing a sway over the conduct of others; and withal a certain fidgetiness of mind, which seemed to derive new stimulus from total want of occupation. She was an Avarilla Maranham, with wider opportunities.

In girlhood, unable to resign herself to the uneventful subordination of the nursery and the school-room, she was always plotting the dismissal of an under-governess, or trying to inspire the Viscountess her mother with a spirit of patronage for some pet drawing-master or mantua-maker. Introduced into the great world, her manœuvres to avoid such and such a partner, or to achieve an invitation to such or such a ball, were of almost Machiavellian art; and from the moment she discovered that the young Duke of Spalding was suspected to be on the eve of a matrimonial engagement with the daughter of one of his Yorkshire neighbours—marked him for her own! She had cared little for him as England's premier Duke; scarcely more as the inheritor

of sixty thousand per annum; but when she saw in the wealthy magnate a prize to be won per force of management, a captive to be transferred from other nets to her own, there was no resisting the temptation; and so skilfully were her projects conceived and executed, that very few months sufficed to render the strategist in hanging sleeves—her Grace the Duchess of Spalding.

Perhaps it was the ready fruition of the scheme which soon rendered propensity a habit, and habit second nature; for the Duchess now became a manœuvrer by vocation. Rich, noble, admired, she could not rest, for very restlessness; but seemed to invent objects of desire for the mere labour of the attainment. Without interest in politics, she became a party woman; without taste for the arts, a patroness; without one pious or Christianly aspiration, a zealous high churchwoman. The poor Duke whom she had finessed out of his first love, she now cheated out of his

nereditary avocations; trafficked in his behalf with ministry; chaffered with his interest; paltered with his patronage. He could not promise a living, but her Grace contrived to induct some Tory *protégé* of her own; he could not renew the lease of a farm, but she managed to introduce a clause. Did he presume to order new furniture for his library, he was sure to find it translated to one of the drawing-rooms; or if he was rash enough to purchase a picture, or give a commission for a statue, it was certain to be pounced upon for the Duchess's private suite of apartments; where, of all the house, it was least likely to meet his eye.

Not that he was an unaffectionate husband; but the overstrained activity of his wife fatigued him to death. The Duke of Spalding's constitutional indolence was even more than patrician, and he found himself wedded to a whirlwind! He was naturally fond of music; but within two years of his marriage, her Grace be-

concerted him into abhorrence of all harmony. He took to hunting; but the Duchess contrived to be neck-and-neck with him over every five-barred gate in the county. He sought refuge in agriculture; but her Grace patent-ploughed him out of the field, and ran him to earth in a crop of ruta-baga. To whatever pastime or employment he addressed himself, *her* intention cast its shadow before; and, scared by the pursuit, Spalding's "occupation" was "gone" in a moment!

There was but one resource! He became a club-man, and locked himself up in the dear delights of whist. The blue chambers of White's and Brookes's defy the intrusion of manœuvring wives; and, within those sacred retreats, the hereditary legislator had for many years past shuffled, cut, and dealt away the session; a period for whose prolongation not even Bellamy himself could supplicate the gods more fervently than the hen-hunted Duke of Spalding.

Still there was Spalding Castle in the distance, with its six or seven months of marital martyrdom; and had not the Duchess one day,

"When cursed with many a granted prayer,"

suddenly hit upon a new object for which to persecute the ministry with little notes (marked "private and confidential") of solicitation, the poor Duke might perhaps have ended his woes by suspending himself, for very weariness, to one of his ancestral oaks. But she had luckily become ambitious of fettering down her husband by a place at court, (Buckhounds, Mastership of the Horse, or new Lord Chamberlainship,—what matters it to the reader?) and, having assailed a chief clerk by the loan of her Opera-box to his wife; a private secretary, by sides of venison and hampers of pine-apples; and the private secretary's public master, by exaggerated representations of borough interest, church preferment, and local influence pertaining to the house of Spalding, her Grace's manœuvres were eventually crowned

with success: from July to January, if not from January to July, the Duke was now no longer his own master; while *she* became more than ever her own mistress.

The joys of new cares, too, were added to her former pleasures: she had children; and the children had nurses, governesses, tutors, masters, to be out-generalled and outwitted. It was a triumph, for a nature such as hers, to manœuvre a naughty child to the Opera, or a sickly one to a drive on a damp day. She taught the little creatures to plan, to plot, to deceive, to equivocate, to lie; and the young lords consequently grew up into *roués*, and the young ladies into women of fashion. But while this auspicious education was in progress, the Duchess did not slumber at her post. She had always some petty intrigue to carry on, some promising young clergyman, of high character and a very pretty vein for poetry, to manœuvre into a prebend; some offending country neighbour of opposite politics, whose

daughters she had vowed should never enter the pale of Almack's; some nineteenth son of a nineteenth Scotch cousin, whom she was trying to get made *attaché* at Rio Janeiro; or some stripling of a political economist, whom she was bent upon having reviewed into notoriety in the Quarterly. Nay, between the pauses of her grander movements, she would even busy herself with the welfare of such small-deer as pages or nursery-maids, set all her energies to work to expose the peccadilloes of some noble friend's groom of the chambers; or congratulate herself upon getting one of Farmer Smith's Patagonian progeny promoted to be drum-major in the Blues.

Between such a woman—such a Duchess—and Mrs. Armytage, there existed a moral antipathy. It was not that the Lady of Holywell was less active, less domineering than the Lady of Spalding Court; but Mrs. Armytage busied herself only with her own concerns and those of her family, while the Duchess could

scarcely bear that a lamp should be extinguished in one of the tin mines of Cornwall without her interference. Mrs. Armytage despised the Duchess as an ambitious *intrigante;* the Duchess despised Mrs. Armytage as *bornée,* even in her despotism. Yorkshire, wide as it is, was scarcely large enough to contain their vast animosity! And then the Armytage was a Whig, and the Spalding a Tory—the Armytage a great lady of the country, the Spalding a great lady of the town. The Duchess could by no means mortify the 'Squiress; for the 'Squiress was a firm and consistent contemner of rank-by-itself rank—never ventured a step beyond her station, and afforded no opportunity to the enemy of humiliating her by repulse.

The Wemmersleys, indeed, had for a moment rejoiced the busy Duchess with the hope of inflicting an humiliation on Holywell. The moment she discovered them to sail in the north of Mrs. Armytage's opinion, *she* courted

them into the summer radiance of her smiles; patronized them here—caressed them here, and exhibited them as the chief objects of her favour. But here again she was mistaken. Whatever took the Wemmersleys to the other side of the county, Mrs. Armytage considered as a happy riddance to the neighbourhood of Holywell; and she was under a real obligation to the Duchess for rendering Mill Hill so often tenantless. At length it occurred to the great lady, whose temper was not softened, nor her disposition ennobled by the practices of a long life of art and artifice, to allure Arthur Armytage into her brilliant London circle, and attach him to the feet of one of her beautiful daughters, who might dismiss him with scorn when a nobler suitor should present himself.

But by one of those unlooked-for entanglements which perplex the web of human destiny, at the very moment the Duchess of Spalding was courting the young Captain to her house, *he* was courting Jack Baltimore's daugh-

ter into his. The Morning Post announced Arthur's abrupt marriage, and the Duchess was defeated; but the Morning Post also announced the *déjeuner* in Portland Place—and the Duchess was avenged. What a marriage! What a match! What a blow for Mrs. Armytage!

Nor had the Wemmersleys failed to feed the vast bonfire of her rejoicings with all the faggots they could make up of ill-natured rumours touching the Baltimore family. In return, her Grace favoured them with the impertinent comments transmitted from Paris by Lord Wyndham Spalding, in his letters to his sisters. *She* knew that Marian was shy and awkward—easily counselled, easily governed, and with no stronger shield than upright intentions to secure her from being counselled and governed ill. *She* knew that the timid Mrs. Arthur had fallen into the control of Lady Arabella Quin, and immediately resolved, should she ever visit Yorkshire, to convert her

into an implement of torture to her long-offending mother-in-law.

Her Grace's first measure towards the accomplishment of her projects, was to obtain favour in the sight of Arthur. Although her sons were intimately acquainted with him, the Duchess knew little more of the young Life-Guardsman previous to his marriage, than is to be learned by a five minutes' colloquy at Almack's, where the interlocutors are a well-diamonded Duchess of fifty, and a shy young Cornet of twenty-one; or by still briefer interviews at the door of her Opera-box, where, in the absence of a more eligible escort, his assistance was tolerated in calling the carriage or tying on the snow-shoe. At that period, indeed, she had felt a certain degree of hesitation in courting him to her house—his assiduities might interfere with those of the young Marquis of Clydesdale, or annoy the highly-exclusive Duke of Witherby, whom she had

still hopes of securing for her daughter Honoria.

But all was over now. Though Lady Honoria and Lady Amabel were still unmarried, the Duchess could, with perfect propriety, invite her young Yorkshire neighbour (who must of course be leading a comfortless bachelor life) to dine in St. James's Square, or take a seat in their box, whenever he had no better engagement. Nothing could be more charitable, nothing more kind than such attentions, particularly considering their political differences, and her son Leicester's recent defeat at Thoroton.

Even her charge to her daughters of "Pray, be very civil to young Armytage, but take care not to let him be in your way," can scarcely be considered a drawback on her well-meant hospitality; while the secret rejoinder of Lady Amabel to her sister,—"Rely upon it, mamma intends to make him her fireguard, as she did

Wèmmersley last season, whenever she wanted to interfere with our flirtations," need only be taken as an evidence of the success of their ladyships' distinguished education in the art and science of modern manners.

CHAPTER XIX.

Here comes the Briton.—Let him be so entertained among you as suits a stranger of his quality. I beseech you all, be better known to this gentleman.

SHAKSPEARE.

THE Duchess's calculation, that Arthur would only too eagerly accept her general invitation, proved erroneous. For a whole week the new member did not make himself visible in St. James's Square; and her Grace, satisfied of the all-surpassing attractions of her gay house and brilliant society, fancied that the sort of shy reserve so common to young Englishmen must be the cause of his absence: yet how to attribute shyness or reserve to the frank and well-bred Mr. Armytage, who had "*fait fureur*" in Paris, whose demeanour at his election

bear-baiting, and whose maiden speech in the House, were already cited as an honour to the county of York?—Still less was her Grace inclined to accept as an apology for his remissness, the motive assigned by her son Lord Leicester, that "Armytage was too well amused at his clubs and among his former brother-officers, to trouble himself with the intolerable nuisance of dressing to dine out."

Intent on the accomplishment of her scheme, the Duchess next decided that Arthur was proud—proud with the susceptible pride of a 'squire; that her civilities had been too familiar; and a vast card was accordingly despatched, inviting him for a solemn dinner-party at a fortnight's date,—a solemn dinner-party on an ex-senatorial Saturday, which left him no plea of evasion. He found one, however, in spite of all her precaution. That one eventful and especial Saturday was the last day of Ascot Races; when profiting by the *dies non*, Arthur had engaged himself to dine

and sleep at Lord Rydal's, in the neighbourhood of Windsor.

The Duchess was excessively provoked; the more so that the recusant object of her patronage could plead an engagement so much to the purpose. Her own sons, ay! even her eldest, her Cupid of fifty descents, the irresistible Marquis of Downham, had expressed in her hearing the most anxious desire to form part of the race-party at Lord Rydal's, and his consciousness of the inaccessibility of such a distinction. That Arthur Armytage had managed to penetrate the exclusive portal, she could neither understand nor forgive!

"I have been attacking this man only to get at his wife,"—was the result of her serious meditations on the subject;—"and I see that it is only *through* his wife I can hope to attack *him*."

And chance favoured the design. On the following day there was what is called a "private view" of a fashionable exhibition;—that

is, an opportunity for the elect of the gay world to crush each other to death, in a mob of five hundred people; instead of taking their ease, among the two or three individuals of doubtful quality paying for their admittance on the following day. In the thickest and hottest of this privileged mob was Arthur fated to encounter the Duchess, panting and ghastly, salts-bottle and *vinaigrette* in hand.

"Delighted to see you, Mr. Armytage.—What a dreadful crowd!—The heat is perfectly overpowering. The directors ought to be more reserved in issuing tickets. Two young ladies already carried out fainting; and old Lord Fussball, in an attack, which I trust may not prove apoplectic,—appearances were sadly against him."

"Can I be of any use in assisting you to make your way towards the door?" inquired Arthur good-naturedly; compassionating her Grace's half-asphyxiated condition.

"Thank you,—no! We are making our way regularly through the rooms.—I have scarcely seen the pictures in this room. Honoria, my love, there is Lord Edward Brereton just squeezing in at the door, and bowing to you."

Arthur was about to profit by this *aside*, and turn away. But the Duchess was quick-sighted as a lynx.

"I hope you have satisfactory news from Holywell, Mr. Armytage?—It is a very great disappointment to my daughters and myself —(Amabel!—Lord Clydesdale going away, and you have not spoken to him!)—that Mrs. Arthur Armytage should have been prevented visiting town this season. We have heard so much of her from my son Wyndham, as to venture to look upon her as an acquaintance; and I was in hopes we should have met very frequently in the course of the season!"

Arthur bowed his acknowledgments.

"As it is, I trust our intercourse will com-

mence on a still more friendly footing in the country. Mrs. Armytage, I know, is wedded to Holywell, and the thirty miles' distance between us has proved an obstacle to intimacy between the families. You must persuade your wife to be more indulgent,—to suppose us neighbours; and leave it to *us* to induce her to look upon us as friends."

The warm feelings of Arthur were touched; they were particularly accessible to any kindness shown to Marian. He was fluent in his thanks;—then, turning to Lady Honoria, whose eyes seemed riveted on a fine Claude, uttered some commonplace remarks on the merits of the collection, from her replies to which it was easy to be gathered that she did not know a Hogarth from a Teniers, a Rubens from a Reynolds.

"If you are fond of pictures, Mr. Armytage," said the Duchess, graciously, "you should accompany me this evening to my bro-

ther Lord Wildingham's;—his gallery is considered one of the most select in London."

Arthur, again all gratitude, was compelled to admit that, if he could get away from the house, he was engaged to join the Rotherhams at the Opera.

"Join the Rotherhams!" And he had never once profited by the Duchess's invitation to her box!

"I did not know the Rotherhams were Opera-going people!" said Lady Honoria, sneeringly. "In fact, one seldom sees them anywhere."

"Opera-going, but not ballet-staying people," replied Arthur with a smile. "Lady Rotherham's health does not admit of her keeping late hours."

"Yes, I am aware that she is a sort of Madame Argan, who has been dying by half inches these one and twenty years," said the Duchess of Spalding. "I used to put her

name down for my footman's weekly circular of inquiries after the sick and convalescent; but as she was always 'as well as could be expected,' and as I expected nothing at all about the matter, I scratched her out at last as dead—or ought to be dead."

Arthur did not laugh, though he saw it was expected of him.

"I fancy Willis pays an annuity to Lady Rotherham and her daughter for airing his rooms. There they are every Wednesday, I am told, as punctual as the candle-lighters;—and, as one is going up the stairs two or three hours afterwards, one is sure to be bowed to from some odd corner by two mummies hooded up in their cloaks to wait for their carriage; and to hear, when yours drives off, that Lady Rotherham's stops the way."

"Not always quite so early!" said Arthur Armytage, piqued for his friends. "I assure you I was dancing with Lady Laura at Lady Rydal's ball, at three o'clock this morning."

"A very pretty story, upon my honour!" exclaimed a wheezy voice issuing from a fat figure in a bright blue pelisse, wedged in between the Duchess of Spalding and Lady Amabel, and overpoweringly scented with *verveine*. "So this is the way you country gentlemen perform your duties in parliament? Poor dear Dyke declares he never gets a glimpse of you in the House, not even when the Leeds railroad was brought forward last week. Well, well!—if you don't make me some very fine promises and come and take your family-dinner with us on Sunday, trust to me for writing word of all your proceedings to your wife!" And poor Arthur found his hands heartily shaken by the good-humoured Mrs. Dyke Robsey, her elbows meanwhile protruding themselves unmercifully into the shrinking sides of the Duchess and her daughter.

But the Duchess was too discreet even to look her astonishment.

"And what in the wide world have you been

doing with yourself ever since you have been in town?" pursued the blue lady, alive to nothing but the good fortune of a meeting with her young relative. "We've been expecting and expecting you to call again, ever since the day you left your card; and no end of dinner-parties, and always a knife and fork kept for *you*. You know you're a first favourite with poor dear Dyke,—only he's rather in dudgeon just now about your name being in the majority against the Liskeard railroad. And between ourselves, my brother Baltimore is getting rather huffy about never being able to get sight of you. He says he calls and calls, and you are always out, or your servant says you are dining at Lord Rotherham's or Botherum's, or some great man's or other. Now you know Jack has a warm heart, and it's natural he should——I beg your pardon, ma'am," cried Mrs. Robsey, interrupting herself to address the Duchess, "but your

voyl is sticking to my chain, and if we don't take care, there'll be a tear,—and tear is sometimes worse than wear,—as my sister Baltimore says to her bantlings."

The Duchess did not, or would not, hear. A slight movement in the crowd favoured her escape; and the magnificent *demi-voile* of *application de Bruxelles* soon hung in shreds round her supercilious face, while, with a languid smile of adieu to Arthur, the Ladies Spalding passed on superior.

"Well, if ever I saw such folly!" cried Mrs. Dyke Robsey. "Forty guineas, if it cost a shilling; and just because she was too idle to help me disentangle it!"

"Hush!—the Duchess of Spalding will overhear you!" whispered Arthur, hoping to moderate her voice, if not her indignation.

"The Duchess—*who* did you say?—the *Duchess?*" cried Mrs. Robsey, still louder than before.

"The Duchess of Spalding.—She is still close to us—be cautious," said Arthur.

"Now why didn't you tell me at once that it was the Duchess of Spalding!" exclaimed Marian's aunt. "It would have been such a famous opportunity for getting acquainted with her, and I've long been wanting to know her. We were all staying together at the York Hotel at Dover last summer. Do see if we can't push after her, and you can introduce me, and I can apologize."

"The Duchess and her daughters, as you perceive, are in haste to leave the room," said Arthur in a low voice, perceiving, from the smiles evident on several strange faces around them, that their conversation had been overheard. "Another time."

"Ay, ay! another time!" she replied, easily satisfied, and easily diverted from her object. "We'll talk about it to-morrow at dinner. Six o'clock and punctual, please, as it's Sunday, on account of the servants. It's poor dear

Dyke's rule, as you may remember, for the establishment to enjoy itself of a Sunday."

"My dear Armytage," whispered Lord Greta, who had accompanied Arthur to the gallery, and hastened to rejoin him as soon as he noticed the departure of the Duchess of Spalding, his "favourite aversion,"—"I think I hear you making an engagement for Sunday, as if you were inclined to forget your promise of accompanying us to Petersham to-morrow!"

"I had indeed forgotten it," replied Armytage; "but pray let me present you to Mrs. Robsey, that you may assist me to plead my excuses."

And an introduction to a Lord—a young and handsome Lord—certainly had its share in averting the good lady's displeasure; while Greta, too gentlemanly to fancy himself irretrievably lost in the eyes of the world, from being seen in conversation with a lady in a flashy pelisse, and too true to his political vocation not to profit by Arthur's whisper of—

"wife to the Whig member for Perjureham," explained the previous engagement of his friend with the most courteous deference.

Escorted to her carriage by the two young men, her vast variety of chains and trinkets jingling at every step, Mrs. Robsey, after uttering very audible adieux to "his Lordship" from the door of her britschka, called aloud to bid Arthur "mind and come and take his mutton with them the first idle day, or poor dear Dyke would never forgive him.—It was shameful of him to give all his time to those Botherums."

Luckily, Lord Greta was out of hearing.

CHAPTER XX.

> Was it kind,
> To leave me like a turtle here alone,
> To droop and mourn the absence of my mate?
> When thou art from me, every place is desert,
> And I, methinks, am savage and forlorn.
>
> OTWAY.

To the Greta family, Arthur Armytage certainly did devote the whole of his leisure. The house of Jack Baltimore it was impossible for him to enter without disgust:—noisy, as it was dirty, disorderly, and necessitous—fit home for a man who, his whole life long, had devoted himself to a horse; and poignant was his regret that the nearest relatives of his wife should be so degraded in the eyes of society—so unattractive in his own. His father's nearest relative, Lord Armytage, occupied a post in the administration; and Arthur kept seclu-

lously aloof, lest he might be supposed to court his Lordship's patronage. But, at Lord Rotherham's, where he was welcomed like the Piccolomini to the hearth of Wallenstein, as the "*kind des Hauses*,"—where he found his earliest friends and playmates, friendly and lively as ever, and principles and habits congenial with his own,—he was glad to take refuge from the solitary publicity of a London hotel. The Earl bade him remember, as he had been wont to do in his holidays and vacations, that there was always a place for him at his table; and Arthur, who had always reverenced Lord Rotherham as his father's most intimate friend—the afflicted witness of his untimely end—felt no scruple in accepting the hospitality thus cordially tendered by his Yorkshire neighbour.

It was so easy, too, to walk home from the House arm-in-arm with his friend Greta, straight to St. James's Place; and Lady Rotherham was so glad to see and welcome a

guest who knew her ten children name by name, and which of them had been run away with by his pony, and which had so narrowly escaped drowning in the reservoir, and whom one and all called "Arthur," and romped with as a brother. Even Lady Laura, though somewhat haughty and reserved with casual visiters, had her old-standing jokes and friendly words of mutual understanding with *him*; so that, after a fortnight passed in London, a particular chair came to be apportioned as that of Arthur Armytage at Lord Rotherham's table, and a particular corner of a particular sofa, in Lady Rotherham's drawing-room, to bear his name. His worthy host and hostess considered that they were doing not only what was kind, but what was *right*, in affording to the son of their old friend, placed in such a position as Arthur, a resource against the temptations of idleness and dissipation. They left him no excuse for wasting his time and his money in barrack-rooms or clubs.

And in such a mode of life, it must be owned that there was something peculiarly agreeable to Arthur. He liked the stir of a large family, combined with the regularity of an orderly one. He liked the *bonhommie* of the Greta tribe — their cheerfulness — their cordiality. The whole thing came refreshingly to him after a prolonged residence at Paris; where, if he had found much to amuse, he had seen little to approve. But now, he was once more among people of his own caste and kind, he was very happy—perfectly happy—*too* happy perhaps, considering that in the first year of his marriage, he was for the first time separated from his wife.

Marian's letters, however, arrived as regularly as the post, to remind him that if *he* was enjoying himself, she was sad and a sufferer. *She* complained of the dulness of the time which was passing for *him* so pleasantly, intreating him, however, and with perfect sincerity of heart, not to apply himself *too* severely

to the duties of his new vocation; not to give up his thoughts *too* exclusively to politics—to seek the relaxation so indispensable for his health—to avoid the anxious fears for herself which she knew must be pressing on his mind.

Arthur's heart almost reproached him with duplicity while he was perusing these affectionate and candid outpourings of Marian's feelings. Yet he had done no wrong; had no conjugal backslidings with which to reproach himself; and to have volunteered to his wife a self-accusation of finding himself too prone to bachelor-enjoyments, and too happy in her absence, would have been at once an injury and an insult.

He profited, therefore, by her often-repeated exhortations, to amuse himself during the intervals of his parliamentary duties;—dining with the Rotherhams, lounging in the Park with Greta, or dancing at Almack's with Lady Laura, whenever they were at the trouble of procuring him a subscription. June, with its

thorns and its roses, its strawberries and its villa-déjeûnés, had already begun; and though Arthur was not heartless enough to purpose prolonging his sojourn in town one hour beyond the necessities of the case, yet he *did* sometimes almost regret that the days passed so quickly, and that the hours were of imperceptible duration.

The fault might in some measure lie with his mother. The atmosphere of Holywell was so apt to be a stormy one!—*too* stormy for a man of Arthur's indolent complexion and cheerful temper. He dreaded the *tracasseries* of the place—the testiness of the old servants—the dependence to which he found himself reduced. Grillon's Hotel wanted (he flattered himself that such was his conviction) only Marian's presence to be a perfect Paradise; for with all the duplicity of this wicked world, few of us succeed in deceiving others so completely as we succeed, without effort, in deceiving ourselves.

One person, meanwhile, was keenly alive to the moral dangers of Arthur's position. The clear-sighted Sophia felt that in Marian's place she should be less satisfied than Marian with the tenour of Arthur's correspondence; and was beginning to count the days to the expected close of the session, almost as eagerly as her sister-in-law. She was better acquainted with the versatility of Arthur's disposition; with his former familiarity in the Greta family, and the expectations to which it had given rise. She even thought her friend Lady Laura wrong, innocently and unconsciously wrong, for continuing to dance with her brother; more particularly when the fact had been pointed out to her notice in one of Mr. Wemmersley's morning visits, by an observation of "So I see, by the Morning Post, that our new Member is taking his Wednesday's privilege of relaxation, and keeping up his loves and friendships of old times?"

"I really do not understand you," said

Sophia, dreading that Marian, who was going through a course of fashions with Mrs. Wemmersley, should overhear the insinuation.

"Don't you? Have you not observed that his pairing off with Lady Laura Greta in the Almack quadrilles, is regularly announced?"

"Very likely. The last time I was in town, I saw my own name coupled among the waltzers, with that of the Duke of Wetherby; *I*, who never waltzed in my life, and never had the slightest acquaintance with the Duke."

"And your brother, of course, has not the slightest acquaintance with Lady Laura?" persisted Wemmersley, laughing significantly.

"On the contrary, they have been friends from childhood; and I fancy it is only on the score of such very old acquaintanceship, that a married man has a right to intrude on a young lady as a partner."

"I thank you for the hint!" he replied; and Sophia was rejoiced that at any cost she had succeeded in diverting him from his object.

"I now understand why you received me so very coolly last year, when you accompanied the Rotherhams to the Doncaster Race ball; and you shall find (at the ball which I conclude our new Member means to give us *at* his return *on* his return,) that I have profited by the lesson. Trust me, I will not again interfere with Lord Greta's better pretensions."

Sophia would have given a great deal to ascertain, after the departure of the Wemmersleys, how much of this commentary on Arthur's conduct had reached the ears of her sister-in-law. But she could not hazard a direct inquiry; and Marian's simplicity of mind was exactly calculated to defeat any other mode of attack. The moment she detected any one trying to discover her sentiments, she made twice as ample a declaration as the occasion needed, often avowing much more than the manœuvrer was bent on ascertaining. Miss Armytage was almost afraid of learning, not only that Arthur's wife had over-

heard all, but to what extent that all affected her feelings, and was likely to influence her conduct.

She noticed, however, that Marian that evening looked paler and sadder than usual; and, on her retiring to rest, ventured to observe to her mother that Mrs. Arthur's strength and spirits were manifestly declining. But Mrs. Armytage, whose thoughts were engrossed by the splendid nursery-furniture and nursery-suits she had that morning received from town for the use of the little heir of Holywell, and purposed presenting on the morrow to her daughter-in-law, attributed her languor to the approach of the event so anxiously anticipated by the family.

The morrow came; the gifts, courteously offered and accepted, scarcely seemed for a moment to occupy the attention of the listless Marian. Old Mrs. Macklin, who had presided over the birth of Arthur and Sophia, and ever since formed a sort of fixture among the

green and ever-springing olive branches at Greta Castle, was somewhat scandalized to see the young lady to whom she was now about to devote her services, so insensible to the beauty of the Valenciennes cockades, and the fineness of the cambric robing; and felt persuaded that Mrs. Armytage must be indignant at the ingratitude of her daughter-in-law. But she was mistaken. Mrs. Armytage liked Marian the better for her indifference to such things.—She began to hope that her mind was less vulgar and trivial than she had imagined.

Time wore on. The days, long and Midsummerish as they were, passed away. All the papers agreed in announcing the prorogation of Parliament for the 21st; and on the 23rd Arthur would be at Holywell! Still, Marian's depression was not diminished, nor Sophia's anxiety. The Duchess of Spalding who, on her annual journey northwards, was in the habit of dignifying Mill Hill by making it her sleeping inn, took the opportunity of

paying a morning visit to Mrs. Armytage, on her progress home the following day; apparently for the purpose of announcing her regret that Arthur's family engagements with the Rotherhams had prevented her the happiness of catching a glimpse of him in town: and when Mrs. Armytage drily replied that it gave her unfeigned pleasure to hear of her son being engrossed by such satisfactory connexions, the Duchess had no readier means of revenge than by redoubling her attentions to the sad and silent Marian; and assuring her that Mr. Armytage had in some degree made the *amende honourable*, by promising that the first visit made by himself and his wife on her recovery, should be to Spalding Court. Marian smiled and bowed her ready acceptance. It was a solace to her to think that her first visit was not already pledged to Greta Castle.

But the information afforded by the gossiping Duchess, and incidentally confirmed in Lady Honoria's chit-chat with Miss Armytage,

that Arthur was the gayest of the gay, the most bachelor-like of bachelor-husbands, did not prepare the family to receive with patience his announcement that, "very particular engagements in town would prevent his being at home till the 25th, when Lord Greta had promised him a place in his carriage."

"Why not come in his own?" exclaimed his proud mother.

"Why not come in the mail?" exclaimed the impatient Marian.

"Why not come at once?" *thought* even the forbearing Sophia.

But they had no leisure for much thinking or saying on the subject. In the course of the day, Mrs. Macklin announced Marian to be seriously ill; and Mrs. Armytage again began to tremble at the prognostications which threatened a triumph to Reginald Maudsley. The old nurse, eager to enhance the merits of her services, hinted that children born under such circumstances seldom survived. Even

the doctors seemed discouraged. An express was hastily despatched for Arthur; and, from the bell-ringers to the park-keepers and their bonfire, all was anxiety and suspense at Holywell.

END OF VOL. I.

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MRS. ARMYTAGE;

OR,

FEMALE DOMINATION.

BY THE

AUTHORESS OF

"MOTHERS AND DAUGHTERS."

IN THREE VOLUMES.

VOL. II.

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FEMALE DOMINATION.

CHAPTER I.

"A boy?—God bless your Highness! 'Tis a *girl*,
Promising boys hereafter!"

HENRY VIII.

WHEN Arthur Armytage, haggard with the fatigue and anxiety of his journey, rushed into the drawing-room at Holywell, prepared to hear the worst, which the solemn deportment of old Simmons on the hall steps had already partly communicated,—he was at a loss to interpret the expression of his mother's countenance. It was not that of affliction,—no!—Marian must be still alive;—it was that of intense vexation. But Sophia, seeing her brother incapable of uttering a syllable of in-

quiry, explained all in a few kind words.—His wife was safe, and he was the father of a little girl.

In another minute he was in Marian's darkened chamber, awaiting the precautions necessary for the announcement of his arrival; and touched as he already was, the tears fell from his eyes as, concealed behind her curtain, he listened to the faint accents in which she murmured, "Another disappointment!—I fancied I heard a carriage!—Will he never come?—Shall I never—never see him again?"

But this one painful moment was followed by hours of unqualified happiness. With one hand locked in her husband's, while contemplating the beauty of the sleeping babe, which bore so remarkable a resemblance to Arthur, it certainly never occurred to Marian that the birth of so fair and promising a creature could be a source of annoyance to any human being. Yet the steward's-room at Holywell, participating in the vexation of its lady, had almost

refused to drink a health to the newly-born; and at what quarter of the universe Miss Armytage the Second was wished, by the whole population of the village, it might not be discreet to conjecture.

The disappointment of the poorer tenants was, however, of brief duration. Mrs. Armytage's attention was roused to the possibility that her mortification might become evident to the neighbourhood, by a visit of congratulation from the inevitable proprietor of Mill-Hill; who mingled with his felicitations the expression of an earnest hope that the next child born at Holywell might be a boy. She accordingly gave orders that, although no bells were to be rung, nor beacon, nor bonfire to be kindled, all the expected gratuities should be bestowed, and all the preparations for festivity continued. The ox need not be roasted whole; but it might still be apportioned to the poor. After all, the little find their account in the ostentations of the great.

But although she prepared herself to receive with the blandest courtesy the congratulations of the neighbourhood and the good wishes of her dependents on the occasion, Mrs. Armytage had very little patience with Marian's exultation in finding herself the mother of a daughter. "She had always so wished for a girl;—girls are such comforts, such companions to their mothers;—boys such plagues, such disappointments!—Her own mother had gone through such anxieties with her seven unruly noisy boys! Her own mother had often told her there was more gratification to be hoped from the possession of one daughter, than from a dozen sons."

"Her *own* mother!"—As if the opinions of a Mrs. Baltimore of Baker-street were to be quoted in a case of heirship to Holywell Park; the ancient estate of Holywell,—the inheritance of the family of Maudsley, from the days of Domesday-book!

But Marian was above propitiating her

awful mother-in-law, either by artifice or hypocrisy. She knew that Mrs. Armytage was vexed,—old Mrs. Macklin had admitted the fact. But she *did* rejoice in her daughter, and would not conceal it. She could not even concur in Arthur's opinion, that his mother should be conciliated by an invitation to become sponsor to the child. For she had always promised "mamma and aunts" that they should be godmothers to her first little girl. Mrs. Armytage smiled contemptuously on learning that her grand-daughter—HER grand-daughter,—was to be named Harriet, after Mrs. Baltimore;—but Marian might have christened it Jacobina, after its godfather, Mr. Dyke Robsey, and she would have disdained to interfere.

Mrs. Arthur appeared, indeed, to have already regained her unhappy skill in the art of giving offence. Mrs. Armytage happened to be present when she expressed to her husband a desire that she might get well as fast

as possible, in order to pass the promised fort-night at Spalding Court; and to overhear her entreaties that she might not be obliged to accept a similar invitation to Greta Castle. "She was quite sure the Rotherhams would bore her to death. Lady Arabella Quin had always assured her that Lady Rotherham was the greatest quiz on earth." And then she freely admitted, that she considered the Wermersleys the pleasantest people in the neighbourhood;—was all eagerness that Arthur should fix the day for his Election Ball, at the Blue Boar; and playfully reproached him with indifference towards so interesting an event. Little did she suspect how disagreeably Arthur's thoughts were pre-occupied. Next to being in love—nothing renders a man so absent, and so unsatisfactory a companion, as being in debt; and Armytage was entangled in difficulties which, although of no very serious nature, proved most annoying to a young man of spirit and honour, unaccustomed to the

degradation of pecuniary embarrassment. On quitting Paris, he had been under the necessity of giving bills to the amount of many hundred pounds; and the extreme liberality with which Mrs. Armytage had come forward in the business of his Election, and the considerable sum she had undertaken to add to his income, in order to enable him to meet the expenses of a residence in town, rendered it almost impossible for him to apply to her for assistance. He trusted that, in the course of a year, he might economize the necessary sum. But his own fortune was now tied up by settlements; and, in the interim, what were to be his resources?

Business with his lawyer, connected with these embarrassments, had been the true cause of delaying his return to Holywell; business which his sudden summons into the country had left unsettled; nor could he, at present, quit Marian, for the renewal of his negociations; so that Arthur's brow was

often clouded by disturbance of mind, which it was above all things his object to conceal from the observation of his mother and sister. His sadness was not, however, lost on Marian; but it was attributed only to regret for the pleasures and associations of London; and in this persuasion, every shade upon her husband's countenance became reflected with deeper gloom upon her own. While her tears fell silently upon her slumbering child, she thought it doubly hard that the sorrows of life should be thus introduced to render her pillow sleepless, at a period consecrated, in most instances, by the utmost vigilance of conjugal tenderness.

Pre-engrossed by his own vexations, her husband detected not the gradual depression of her spirits; or, naturally, attributed the alteration of her manners to the feebleness of her frame. Yet he considered her sufficiently convalescent to entitle him to ride over to Spalding Court, to consult his friend Lord Wyndham, who was just arrived from the con-

tinent, concerning his pecuniary dilemma; for when people get into mischief, it is always to those on mischief intent that they turn for counsel. Arthur decided that Winsome Wyn, constantly involved in scrapes of a similar nature, could not but be an admirable adviser. For any other purpose, his friend Greta, or his friend Greta's father, would have been readily preferred; but he dared not, on this occasion, refer himself to Lord Rotherham, who, he was persuaded, would not fail to force his personal assistance upon the son of his old friend. Lord Wyndham's purse, no doubt, was equally at his service; but the purse of a younger son and a gambler would probably convey no alarming weight of obligation.

"I wish you were not going to Spalding Court, just now," observed Sophy, on learning from her brother that the distance of the visit would render it necessary for him to sleep there, in the event of his friend Wyn being already arrived; or at Greta Castle, a few

miles off, in order to avoid a formal day with the Duke and Duchess.

"And why not?—Marian is almost recovered."

"True—but any uneasiness on your account might throw her back."

"Uneasiness! What uneasiness can possibly result from a man's riding across the country to dine and sleep with a friend?"

"No reasonable anxiety, I admit," said Sophy, blushing with the apprehension of betraying the secret she had half discovered, half divined, of the jealous griefs of her sister-in-law. "And then my mother is so much annoyed by the idea of your going uninvited to the Duke of Spalding's."

"My dear little Soph, had you only heard the Duchess's general invitations to me in London, you would have fancied me a bachelor duke, with the rent-roll of a German sovereign; and admitted that even the susceptibility of a Mrs. Armytage need suffer no alarm."

"But you have not paid a single visit since your return to our oldest friends and neighbours—the Maranhams, for instance."

"Our oldest neighbours, indeed!" interrupted Arthur. "Ask yourself whether it would be natural for me to prefer the society of those weird women to that of my young friends the Spaldings."

"And then you have decided to go on Tuesday," said Sophy, abandoning point after point to the brother so long accustomed to exercise unlimited influence over her thoughts and actions,—"and on Wednesday the tenants are to have their feast."

"And cannot they eat their beef and pudding, in my daughter's honour, without my being present to wish them a good appetite?"

"My mother fancied you would make it a point to appear among them on such an occasion."

"Had I even proposed it, she would never

have forgiven me. You know how she hates my interference."

"It would be a pity, however, that you should thwart her on so trifling a temptation," persisted Miss Armytage; the recollection of Marian's pale face and of her mother's angry one prompting her to persevere.

But Arthur, whose humour was just then strongly tinctured with the irritation arising from a London attorney's letter on the subject of his bills, was no less obstinate than his sister.

"I am tired out by the constant apprehension of thwarting my mother's whims and fancies," said he. "At my age it is time to leave off leading-strings. The subjection in which I have been held from the hour of my birth has proved the bane of my life—has prevented me from taking my place in society as I ought—has prevented me from marrying as I ought——"

Sophia, fancying that this last remark bore reference to Lady Laura Greta, felt the colour rise in her cheeks.

"Well, well, let us say no more about it," she cried, dreading what might follow.

"I beg your pardon, let us say all that is to be said, now we are on so ungracious a subject. I wish to prepare you, Sophy, for seeing me throw off this miserable state of subservience—for seeing me vindicate my rights and act like a man. Henceforth I shall go where I please, live with whom I please; and should my mother persist in opposing my wishes at every turn, and reducing me to the condition of an automaton,—good bye Holywell! I swear to Heaven I will retire to some hovel in Wales, and never see her face again!"

"You are angry now, and I will not dispute the point with you," said the mild Sophia, aware that Arthur's wrath was never of very long continuance. "I know you do too much

justice to my mother's excellence ever to be betrayed into treating her with disrespect. Meanwhile, do not talk quite so loud; for you have a little wife whose nerves are not very strong just now; and who, if I mistake not, has already learned to tremble at the sound of an angry voice."

CHAPTER II.

"I strongly wish for what I faintly hope;—
Like the day dreams of melancholy men,
I love to wander in that golden maze."
DRYDEN.

TUESDAY came,—and Arthur went;—went, in spite of his mother's sullen, and his wife's sorrowful countenance.

"I shall be at home to-morrow in time to preside over the tenants' feast," said he to Mrs. Armytage, as he bid them all farewell. "Instead, therefore, of sleeping at the Duke's, as I intended, I shall get as far back on my way home to-night as Greta Castle. I find that the Rotherhams came down from town yesterday."

"*But* yesterday,—and he makes his way

there to-day," sighed Marian to herself, as he quitted the room; and rising to retire to her own.

"*Preside* over the tenants' feast!" reiterated Mrs. Armytage aloud. "I beg it to be understood, that so long as *I* am at Holywell, I require no assistance in the presidency of my household arrangements."

"It is *I*, mother, who am in fault,"—observed Sophia, ever ready to shelter others at her own expense. "I ventured to tell Arthur that I thought his presence would be expected here to-morrow; which induced him to return and sleep to-night at Greta Castle."

"It is to be regretted you were not equally officious two years ago," cried Mrs. Armytage, whose temper was roused to the utmost by the sound of the departing hoofs of Arthur's horse, and her detestation of the Duchess of Spalding; "when all the county was busy with his attachment to your friend Lady

Laura. Had you persuaded him to visit Greta Castle *then*,—you would have conferred a real benefit on him and his family!"

Sophia turned away in trepidation, just in time to discern Marian's white dress retreating along the conservatory. She flattered herself her sister-in-law had been too deeply ensconced among the myrtles and heliotropes to overhear the last bitter apostrophe; and, when they met again in the afternoon, exercised an anxious scrutiny over Marian's countenance, to ascertain whether she had been weeping. But Marian was engaged in caressing her little girl,—and "made no sign." Mrs. Armytage, too, was engaged;—engaged in directing the morrow's entertainments; and Sophy accordingly profited by the leisure afforded her to ponder in a solitary ramble over some intelligence recently imparted to her by her brother;—intelligence dearly concerning her happiness; but which the events in the Holy-

well family during the past month had forbidden her to consider too deeply.

Precisely at the disastrous moment which summoned Arthur into Yorkshire, a rumour had accidentally reached him at his club, that his friend Rainsford, at that time unaccountably absent from town, had been sent for to the dying bed of a distant relative, reputed to be immensely rich, and supposed to entertain intentions of adopting Edgar as his heir. Nothing further had transpired. Every one's good wishes were with "one of the best fellows in the world." But he was still absent; —no announcement of old Rainsford's death had appeared in the newspapers; and Arthur Armytage, aware that no actual engagement subsisted between his sister and his friend, felt the impossibility of addressing to him from Holywell those friendly inquiries respecting his change of circumstances which, in a less delicate position, would have flowed natu-

rally from his pen. No sooner, indeed, had he communicated the report to Sophia, than she earnestly interdicted all communication on the subject.

Her hopes were not the less sanguine for being thus modestly subdued. She was aware that a brother of Edgar's father had held a high appointment in India, and that between him and his nephew no communication had ever existed. Old Rainsford was a miser and a humourist; and although as likely to bequeath his property to the foundation of an hospital for decayed Lascars, as to any member of his family, might perhaps have been moved, by his nephew's high reputation and rising prospects, to adopt him as a son. After all, then, he might be placed in a situation to claim her hand—to surmount her mother's objections—to insure the happiness of her future life! The next month, the next week, the next day, might bring confirmation of these tantalizing rumours, and reward her

patient—her more than authorized fidelity! For a moment, Sophia almost wished she had accepted Lady Rotherham's invitation to London, that she might have been on the spot to catch the first tidings of Edgar's prosperity. She fancied that her interest in the subject would have enabled her instantly to ascertain the truth. But another minute's reflection reminded her that her sojourn in the Greta family might have also tended to strengthen that attachment on the part of her friend Laura's brother, her rejection of which, she feared, might one day produce an estrangement between the families; and again, on considering how many were the moments when her presence at Holywell had afforded support and comfort to her weak, but amiable sister-in-law, she admitted that everything had happened for the best. Yes—*everything!* For now that Arthur and his family were settled at Holywell, her mother could more readily spare her to preside over the household happi-

ness of another; and "Mrs. Edgar Rainsford's" place would be filled by Mrs. Arthur Armytage!

Meanwhile, poor Sophy's waking visions, brilliant as they were, scarcely shone so bright as the sun that beamed the following morning upon Holywell;—the glorious and unclouded sun of an English July, when the harvest is ripening in the fields, and the fruit in the orchards —when Nature seems to pour forth her abundance in unchecked prodigality—when even the poor who labour are content, and the beasts who perish, satisfied—when, their wickets and their lattices ajar, the humblest cottages become purified by the breath of summer—while the sick and the aged sit in the sunshine, and are cheered—when the joyous children roll upon the green sward, and the very cur with which they are frolicking appears to be in better humour with its shaggy coat.

Such was the aspect of the country when

Arthur, released from the hospitality of Spalding Court (but not till he had passed the night under its gorgeous roof), turned his horse's head towards Holywell; nor could he help contrasting, as he passed the precincts of the Spalding estate, and at the distance of ten miles entered those of his mother, the difference perceptible in the lands of the operative, and those of the aristocratic proprietor. The Duke—frustrated in all his plans by the Duchess, who, the moment she found her frustration complete, resigned her monopoly into the hands of an unenlightened and interested steward — was a well-meaning, ill-judging landlord. His farms were in bad condition; his woods ruined by improvidence; his lands ill-drained — everything misconducted. But at Holywell, all was order, industry, and prosperity—the results of a well-administered expenditure. There were no fancy cottages—no picturesque villages—no Doric rectories. But the ancient hamlets were

substantially kept up—the farms surrounded by solid offices—the schoolhouses and the almshouses for the young and infirm, spacious and cheerful. The parsonages looked snug and respectable—the churchyards, neat—the whole population, thriving.

Arthur's best feelings were gratified. "My mother's temper may be irritable," meditated he, as he made such speed along the green lanes as the fervour of the weather would permit; "but her principles are sound, and her feelings in the right place. She has been wiser in her generation than her son will prove hereafter. I should never have had the patience or the forethought to effect all this. Her whole life has been devoted to Holywell, and it does her credit: there is not so well-regulated an estate in the county. I can forgive her for being proud: it *is* something to be Mrs. Armytage of Holywell."

This last exclamation was almost involuntarily uttered as he attained the high grounds

forming the northern boundary of the park, and caught sight, in one glorious landscape, of its many-tinted woods—of the broad river sweeping along the valley below, with the ruins of the ancient monastery of the Holie Well, standing lonely in the midst of a grassy glade —the noble mansion-house gleaming out at intervals from its sheltering oaks and chestnuts—the majestic bridge—the distant temple —the rising shrubberies—all united and filled up into a sylvan picture by the widely-spreading verdure of the park.

A nobly-wooded valley still intervened between him and the lodge connecting the village of Holywell with the park, on emerging from which, he found himself suddenly in the midst of the tents erected for the promised convivialities of the day. To his surprise and regret, the tenants were already assembled; and as there was no hope of passing unobserved through the lodge, so as to enjoy a momentary interview with his wife previously to

entering upon his duties of hospitality, Arthur dismounted with a good grace, accepted, with a cordial smile, the congratulations poured upon him on all sides, and, making his way towards a tent where a group of farmers were eagerly discussing the markets and the politics of Thoroton, he was soon surrounded by the same affectionate deference which had been formerly conceded to his ill-fated father. The tenants took pride in their young squire, more especially since he had been a soldier and a parliament man.

It was at this unlucky moment, when all men's eyes were bent on Arthur, and all tongues cried "God save him!"—while many a venerable white head was uncovered in his honour, which had paid the same tribute of respect to three generations of the family, that Mrs. Armytage, satisfied in her own mind that her son was at thirty miles' distance, and that he had gone out of the way expressly to avoid

the tumults of the celebration, descended from her pony chair within the lodge gate, where her chief domestics were in waiting to escort her; and, leaning on Sophia's arm, advanced majestically along the short double avenue of elms connecting the village with the park.

To her amazement there was not a soul to welcome her! Old Hardywood was by her side, and Simmons and the rest were following; but between the gay, noisy throng, visible in the sunshine beyond the deep shadow of the overspreading elms, and the spot where her arrival was expected, not so much as a straggling child to drop a frightened curtsey to Madam Armytage!

"Their sports have already begun," said Sophia, interpreting her mother's look of surprise.

"Before my honoured mistress's arrival?" grumbled Old Simmons. "No, no—they know better."

But, on attaining the verge of the avenue, the truth became apparent. *There* stood Arthur—like the image which Nebuchadnezzar the King had set up, with the whole multitude bowed down before him! He was talking to this man, shaking hands with that, and laughing and chatting with all.

Mrs. Armytage's colour went and came, for she found herself standing almost unheeded amid the throng.

"Had I suspected that you were bent upon courting clandestine popularity, free from my observation," said she, addressing her son in a suppressed voice, "your sister and myself would have been spared a hot and dusty drive."

Arthur was too much startled to reply; and his mother persevered in the same bitter and taunting strain. But he felt his spirit rebelling within him; and lest he should be tempted to utter some unworthy rejoinder, bowed cour-

teously around, made his way through the crowd, took his horse from the groom, and, mounting in a second, scarcely drew breath till he found himself beneath the portico of Holywell.

CHAPTER III.

I'd rather in the centre of the earth
Be closed deep, to dig my upward way
To the far-distant light, than stay me thus,
And, looking round upon my bounded state,
Say—This is all!

JOANNA BAILLIE.

"WHAT letters, love, were you reading when I came into the room?" inquired Arthur, listlessly, of his wife, after having affectionately embraced and condoled with her on the increased languor of her looks.

"Nothing very interesting—only some old papers," replied Marian, the paleness of her cheek giving place to a rising blush, as she attempted to thrust them still farther under the pillow of the sofa.

"They looked like letters."

"No!—only bills—papers. How long have you been in riding over from Spalding Court?

and what did you settle with the Duchess about our visit?"

"Nothing: as soon as you are strong enough to leave home I am to write and let her know," replied Arthur, still, with a marital instinct, keeping his eye on the pillow of the sofa.

"But if you came away so early," resumed Marian, although her husband had not alluded to the hour of his departure, "I am afraid you had no breakfast. Did you stop at Lord Rotherham's?"

"No!—I cut straight across the country, to save time; but Wyndham Spalding's Italian fellow brought me a cup of coffee and a roll in my own room before I set off. Of course I did not choose to disturb the family by my unreasonable hours." And still he kept his eye on the cushion.

"I fancy the Spaldings keep up all their London hours and habits in the country?" resumed Marian. "The Duchess struck me, the morning she was here, as the most completely

Londonized—fashionized person I ever beheld."

"Yes—odious—that is—charming;—very agreeable house—very amusing people," replied Arthur, in an absent, pre-occupied manner, and vexed with himself for not daring to ask his wife in a straight-forward way to show him the papers. But nothing is so difficult as to be straight-forward, where the person you love, and desire to love, seems inclined to equivocate.

The next minute, the nurse, previously summoned, brought in the baby; and Mrs. Arthur, in the delight of exhibiting the wonders of improvement which a lapse of twenty-four hours had wrought in her darling, forgot her secret hoard. While she rose from the sofa, to gratify the infant with the brighter light of the window, Arthur quietly drew forth a handful of yellow, soiled manuscripts, written in an old-fashioned Italian hand, which he seemed vaguely to recognize. There were figures and

dates mingled with the writing; the papers were probably, what Marian had asserted, old, very old bills.

"What did you find in this rubbish to interest you; and why did you put aside the papers when I came in?" he now inquired; when Marian, turning round, saw the roll in his hand; his natural ingenuousness returning, the moment his jealous suspicions were relieved.

"Because I thought you might be angry with me for reading them, instead of giving them at once to your mother," replied Marian, with equal frankness. "Mrs. Macklin found them in a recess of the old ebony press, of which she begged the use for the nursery. They seem to be of no consequence; — we may as well burn them;—they would not have been left in the press, had they been worth preserving."

"True—I will burn them in my own room," said Arthur; "it is so hot a day that the blaze might incommode you."

"Give them to Macklin to burn; there is a fire in the nursery."

"Never give papers to servants to burn," said Arthur, carelessly. "At best, they lose their time (which is yours) trying to gratify their curiosity by decyphering what cannot be of the slightest importance to them; at worst, they set fire to the chimney."

And he put the papers into his pocket. A word or two had met his eye which excited his curiosity; and striking must the word have been which arrested his attention at such a moment; for, on entering Marian's room, the utmost effervescence of human petulance was fretting in his bosom. But there was something in the feminine youthfulness of her appearance and manner, especially just then, enhanced by the first expansion of motherly feeling, peculiarly calculated to turn away wrath. She was mild, pale, low-voiced—very different from the affected Parisian Belle, whose nervous tone of over-excitement had so roused

the prejudices of Mrs. Armytage. However much the daughter of Jack Baltimore and the niece of Mrs. Dyke Robsey, there was nothing vulgar or offensive in Marian—she wanted only tact to become a charming woman—how small a deficiency in a wife!

"I have had letters from home this morning," said she, having apparently already forgotten Arthur's appropriation of Mrs. Macklin's discoveries.

"Your family are well?"—

"Quite well; but evidently hurt that they saw so little of you while you were in town. I must write and explain to them how completely you were engrossed by your parliamentary duties."

(Parliamentary duties!—alas! how vast a screen has that pretext afforded to the faults and follies of husband-kind!)

"They are all dying to see little Harriet!" continued Marian; "and Mamma says that if Bob and Jem had not been sent home from

Parson's Green with the measles, she would have got into the mail as soon as she heard of my safety, and come down to have a peep at us."

Arthur offered secret thanks to the Hygeia presiding over the preparatory schools of the metropolis, for having preserved him from so great an evil!—while his wife continued:—"But it was all for the best; for my Uncle and Aunt Robsey, who are tired of Cheltenham and Ramsgate, intend coming to the North this autumn, and making the tour of Buxton, Matlock, and Harrogate."

"They had better confine themselves to Derbyshire," interrupted Arthur—"Derbyshire is the most picturesque county in England—I am sure they would delight in Derbyshire."

"But I do not think my aunt cares very much for scenery—she likes stir and bustle; and has heard that the Derbyshire bathing-places are dull."

"Quite a mistake, I assure you!—Buxton is extremely gay. All the people from Liverpool, Manchester, and Birmingham, frequent Buxton: there are plenty of balls—the place will just suit her."

"I hope not," said Marian, innocently; "for she has promised to come on as far as Scarborough, and take a house large enough to hold us all—one of the best in the place—and we are to go over and spend a month with her. I am sure the sea-air will be of great service to baby."

"My dear love, the baby requires no service. I never saw a more healthy child."

"So Mrs. Macklin says—the finest she ever nursed—much the finest! Still I think I should like to go to Scarborough."

"You forget your visit to the Spaldings," said Arthur.

"Oh! no—I would not, on any account, give up my visit to the Spaldings. But it need not interfere with the Scarborough plan;

for my aunt and uncle have determined to time their tour, so as to be here for Doncaster races. Papa, you know, comes down every year to the races, and this time they will all come together—only think, how delightful!"

And Arthur did think!—and with a face rueful as the professional countenance of the expounder of sepulchral emblems in Westminster Abbey! The idea of presenting his pretty little wife to his mother's friends and the aristocratic world of Yorkshire, surrounded by Robseys,—Jack Baltimores,—and Tom Warleys!—Rather emigrate at once to the Illinois, or Swan River!

"And what have you said in reply to all these schemes?" he inquired in a hesitating voice.

"That I could decide on nothing till I had consulted you."

"And *I* on nothing, till I have learned what are my moth——" he was going to add, "my mother's plans for the autumn;" but at

that moment, his heart revolted against the servility of the phrase.

"Do you not think that, as the day is so fine, I might take a drive this morning?" inquired Marian, who was still loitering near the windows with her child in her arms.

"Certainly,—a drive would strengthen you and do you good."

"I do so want to have a peep at the tenants' feast! Célestine says it is a *triste affaire*;—nothing but beef and beer; no swings, no merry-go-rounds, no *pain d'épice* as they have at the *fêtes* in France. Still I should really like to see the people enjoying themselves."

"Why did you not accompany my mother, if you wished for a drive?" inquired Arthur with a misgiving heart.

"I did not think of it," replied his wife; but the colour rose self-accusingly on her pale cheek.

"You did not choose it, you mean;" said

Arthur, smiling and shaking his head with a reproving gesture.

"No! indeed,—I should have liked it beyond any thing!" cried Marian. "But, entre nous, Sophia hinted to me that Mrs. Armytage did not wish it."

"Not wish for your company?—a very officious suggestion of Sophia's. Why should she suppose any such thing?"

"Ah! do not call any action of your sister's officious!" exclaimed Marian, gently replacing her sleeping child in its *berçonnette;* and taking a place on the sofa close beside her husband. "I assure you it was with a most mournful face, and with tears in her eyes, that Sophy whispered to me her advice not to propose sending down the child into the village, or joining the party, unless you arrived in time to give me your arm."

"How strange, how unaccountable!" mused Arthur.

"Not strange or unaccountable on the part

of Sophia," resumed his wife. "Sophia would do, and has done, every thing in her power to spare me a moment's mortification. If you did but know how kind, how *very* kind she was during your absence in London, when I was out of spirits, and, perhaps, a little out of temper — sitting with me hour after hour, talking or silent as pleased me best; reading to me, singing to me; just as my fancies were inclined."

"Dear, good girl!" ejaculated Arthur, pleased with his sister, and scarcely less with the cordial testimony of his wife.

"And then she took such pains, in her mild, quiet way, to prevent my saying and doing things that—that"——she hesitated.

"Well?"

"That might prejudice your mother against me. You know how very apt Mrs. Armytage is to take exception about trifles; and you know how very disagreeable she can make herself when she is displeased."

"Indeed I *do!*" cried Arthur, with some energy; roused for the first time to consciousness of all his wife might have had to encounter from the arbitrary temper of Mrs. Armytage. "But surely, situated as you were, she could not have ventured to treat you with harshness?"

"I have always lived with such warm-hearted, kind people," replied Marian, "that I scarcely know what the word harshness means. But her coldness and uncommunicativeness seemed like harshness to *me*. I wanted somebody to cheer me and talk to me like a mother, being away from my own friends. But when I was ill and unhappy, she used still to call me "Madam," and "Mrs. Arthur Armytage;" so that I did not dare even comfort myself by crying in her presence."

"That *was* hard!" said Arthur, trying to smile, as he affectionately kissed his wife,—

not liking her to see how much he was touched by her ingenuous simplicity.

"Indeed I felt it so, at the time. But, thank goodness, it is all over now. Only I am afraid that I shall never cease to feel, what I have felt from the first, a stranger in this house. Beautiful as Holywell is, and much beyond any place where I have ever lived, you cannot think how desolate it makes me feel. I would much rather reside with you in any farm-house on the estate."

"Whims and fancies!" cried Arthur, again striving to smile. "You are vexed just now at Sophia's hint about the fête. I dare say it was only a mistake."

"*No* mistake!—I know I am very stupid, and know nothing of the world. Lady Arabella, you remember, used always to be laughing at what she called my want of tact. Still I have observation enough to be aware that Mrs. Armytage is dreadfully mortified at

your marriage with an insignificant person like myself; when she wanted you to choose Lady Laura Greta."

"Lady Laura Greta?"—interrupted Arthur, inconsiderately. "Why, it was my mother, and my mother alone, who prevented the match! We should have married years ago, if my mother had not all but forbidden me to enter Lord Rotherham's house! I went into the army chiefly to get out of the way of being bullied about Greta Castle. No—no! my dear Marian," he continued, quite unconscious of the pain he had inflicted,—"set your heart at ease on that score! Nothing would have annoyed Mrs. Armytage half so much as to see me married to a woman of a rank superior to her own."

Marian now drew so deep a sigh, that her husband turned towards her, and was struck by the variability of her complexion.

"I really believe you do want air!" said he, goodnaturedly. "After Sophia's hint, how-

ever, do not let us think of the feast or the village. If Mrs. Macklin will give you leave, put on your bonnet, and we will try a stroll in the shrubberies."

CHAPTER IV.

A wife!—a silly, harmless, household dove,
Fond without art, and kind without deceit.

DRYDEN.

MARIAN was not only "as well as could be expected," but happier than could have been expected, when, leaning on her husband's arm, she stole down the great pompous galleried staircase of Holywell,—through the conservatory, and into the bright and beautiful flower-garden. Four weeks' seclusion tended wonderfully to enhance the delights of sunshine, fresh air, and liberty. When last she wandered through that garden, it had been mourning over Arthur's absence, pining for the sound of his voice,—and now—now—he was by her side, and she was the mother of his child!

"After all, this *is* a perfect Eden!" faltered the young wife.

"Too truly said!" replied Arthur, laughing, "for here comes the evil one to verify the comparison!"

And at that moment, a turn of the shrubbery brought them in view of Mr. Wemmersley, followed by a shabby-genteel man, apparently much in awe of his own Sunday coat.

"How very tiresome!—how impossible it seems to have a moment's perfect enjoyment!" cried Marian, almost out of humour at such an interruption at such a moment.

"Enchanted to see you out again, my dear Madam Armytage! how are you?" said Wemmersley, meeting them, and evidently as much disconcerted as themselves; while the shabby-genteel individual stood uncovered and abashed. "I am afraid I am here as an intruder. But, concluding all the family were down yonder at the Cross, I took the liberty of

bringing my head-gardener"—(he had but one)—"to look at the new flues of the Holywell pinery."

"You are sadly out of your road then," replied Arthur, coolly;—"you have passed the turning leading to the gardens by half a mile."

"I thought it would be a good opportunity to avoid being in any one's way," continued Wemmersley, disregarding him, and fancying he had completely disguised his real purpose of spying out all the Holywell improvements, and learning from his gardener of what plants it was best worth while to ask for cuttings and suckers.

"I thought I heard my mother offer you the plan of the new flues?" observed Arthur, perceiving that Wemmersley, having dismissed his follower to the kitchen-garden, was preparing to bear them company.

"Did she?—I scarcely remember."

"But you said you thought the system very inferior to that pursued at Mill-hill."

"Did I?—I must have been an ass!—The Duchess of Spalding frankly told me, she considered the pine she tasted at luncheon at Holywell very superior to ours."

"She must have said it to annoy you," observed Marian, quietly; "for the Spaldings arrived here soon after breakfast, and no luncheon was even proposed."

"Then it must have been Lady Rotherham."

"Lady Rotherham has not tasted fruit these thirty years. She would as soon swallow a dose of nux vomica as a slice of 'pine,'" retorted Arthur.

"Well—no matter who it was. Some one, desirous to put me out of conceit with my gardener, or my stock, or my pinery, assured me those of Mr. Armytage were the best in the county; and as it is never too late to mend,

here I am to take my lesson. But why are you not presiding over your plum-puddings and rounds of beef, my dear Armytage? My bailiff tells me your preparations have raised the price of coals in the neighbourhood."

"Lucky, then, that we happen to be in the dog days," said Arthur, drily.

"I suppose you have sent your little son—I beg your pardon—I mean your little girl, to do the honours in your place?"

"No; my little girl is safe at home in her nursery. I did not suppose the din of tabors and fifes was likely to be more agreeable to *her*, poor child, than I found it myself."

"Oh! you *have* been there, then. Well—I have lost my wager!"

"Your wager?"

"I staked a sovereign with Gumption last night that you would not *show*."

"I am glad you thought my proceedings worthy the hazard of your money. But why you should imagine me disinclined to show

myself to my mother's tenants, I cannot imagine."

"Simply because they *are* your mother's tenants; and we all know that Mrs. Armytage rules, and chooses to rule, supreme at Holywell. Prince Harry must not assume the crown before his time! And pray, when are we to have our election ball at Thoroton? My wife's new dress has been waiting these two months."

"As soon as *my* wife feels well enough to preside over so noisy an assembly," said Arthur.

"Your *wife*?—oh! ay—very true; wife to the member—it *must* be *Mrs. Arthur*. Ay—ay! That accounts for the delay. But you had better have got through the ceremony during Mrs. Arthur Armytage's illness, and that would have obviated all difficulties."

"What difficulties?—what do you mean?"

"Only that, as Mrs. Armytage came forward so liberally on the election, and sacrificed

her nephew, and her objections, we concluded you would pay her the compliment of making her lady-paramount at your ball, which, as we all know, is a post she is never averse to occupy.

"I feel so much fatigued that I must beg Mr. Wemmersley to excuse us, and allow me to return to the house," interrupted Marian, perceiving from certain involuntary twitches of her husband's arm that he was becoming greatly irritated. And Wemmersley had accordingly no alternative but to raise his hat, and beg he might be no restraint upon their movements.

"And in this miserable light does her arbitrary temper expose me to be regarded by all the country!" cried Arthur, as they returned to the house; too much excited by Wemmersley's taunts to be aware that he was thinking aloud. "At *my* age, a man—a representative of the interests of thousands—a husband—a

father—to be kept in such vile subservience! it is too much."

And Marian was again and again obliged to complain of fatigue, of uneasiness, of indisposition, in hopes to distract his attention, and induce him to moderate his voice. Arrived in the hall, he insisted on carrying her up stairs; and having carefully laid her on the sofa in her own room, proposed leaving her in quiet as a pretext for retiring to his—for the pleasure of "nursing his wrath to keep it warm."

But the Venetian blinds of his dressing-room were down, and its atmosphere refreshing. The great arm-chair, too, looked inviting after his feverish morning's ride; and Arthur's first movement was to exchange his coat for a cool dressing-gown, in order to enjoy the *dolce-far-niente* till dinner-time. But, as he threw it aside, a rustling in the pocket reminded him of the papers from which his recent ebullition of temper had withdrawn his

attention; and, having secured the door, and turned the blinds so as to admit sufficient daylight for his purpose, he was soon deep in the perusal of the old mildewed pages.

The two first that fell into his hands were disappointing enough, and almost determined him to throw aside the rest—mere draughts of leases, written in the cramped hieroglyphics of an attorney's clerk. The third was a recipe in a formal Italian hand, which he instantly recognized to be that of his grandfather Maudsley, for curing the distemper, and fumigating a kennel. He was sure it was his grandfather's; the writing, of a very peculiar character, being similar to that in which certain prayers and supplications were inscribed in the first leaf of every prayer-book in the family pew,—an ancient collection of rituals, some of which invoked the blessings of Providence "on Her most Gracious Majesty Queen Anne." Arthur no longer doubted that the papers had been Mr. Maudsley's, left acciden-

tally undiscovered in the old escrutoire, and of no further consequence.

He was about to lay aside the remainder, when the page which had first attracted his notice as containing the names of his father and mother, again claimed his attention; and as he read on and on, his eyes became riveted to the paper. Yet he was almost inclined to distrust their evidence:—to doubt whether he were alive and in his right senses!—His breath grew short, even to gasping; the dew rose upon his forehead;—and he laid down the roll.

"This is too absurd!" cried he aloud; recovering himself after the lapse of a minute. "To be thus moved by a thing that will turn out of no sort of importance!"

But a second glance convinced him that the codicil to old Maudsley's will, which he had been perusing, although styled a copy, was formally signed with his name, and witnessed by three witnesses. The names of two were

strange to him; the third was that of old Hardywood.

And what intention, after all, did that codicil record?—What was the deed which had so moved the feelings of Arthur Armytage? Neither more nor less than an instrument conveying to himself, at the age of twenty-one, the entire possession and enjoyment of the Holywell estate. The codicil, executed shortly after the marriage of his parents, conferred on their eldest son the privileges of sole heirship, in the event of his daughter's husband dying during the minority of the boy. It was evident that the excellent qualities of the elder Arthur had wrought a change in the old man's views. He seemed to have felt that the future representation of the family needed not to be indispensably vested in the person of a female.

Arthur, then, Arthur solely and wholly, was now master of Holywell! As the fact became clearly manifest to his mind, his first move-

ment was to rise from his chair with a burst of exultation;—his next was to reseat himself with a poignant pang of self-reproach.

His mother!—What was to become of his mother; who had been all in all to Holywell, and to whom Holywell was all in all;—whose name, whose very nature, seemed to be that of "Mrs. Armytage, of Holywell Park!" Such a reverse would certainly prove the death of his mother; his upright conscientious mother, who, faithful to her early widowhood, had refused more than one noble suitor for the sake of her children; his mother,—who had done her duty in her generation,—whose career of life was three parts ended,—whose latter days must be—but no!—the thing was not to be hazarded! The existence of the codicil was unknown to all but him. He would destroy it at once, and forego the temptation!

Already the paper crackled in his hand; and, had there been a fire in the room, it is probable that his generous purpose would

have been instantly fulfilled. But that momentary pause brought reflection. Had he a right thus to dispose of the codicil? It conveyed to himself only a vested right; and, in the form of entail, established a similar claim for any son of his own,—nay, more; it set apart a sum of 25,000*l.* for the younger children of old Maudsley's daughter; and to this, Sophia was evidently entitled. The dowry, too, of Mrs. Armytage was settled at two thousand per annum. No! he could have no pretext for cancelling a legal document of so comprehensive a nature!

That Mrs. Armytage was cognizant of the existence of such a deed, never for a moment entered his mind. It was evident indeed that any person interested to *conceal,* would at once have *destroyed,* the paper—not left it in a place of such uncertain security. Arthur remembered to have heard that his grandfather's decease had been a very sudden event, the

result of port wine and apoplexy; and he also remembered that Lord Rotherham had mentioned to him the general surprise of the country on the old man's testamentary dispositions becoming known. So attached was he to his son-in-law, that his nearest friends were persuaded some ulterior bequest must have been made; and, at the request of Mrs. Armytage, a diligent search had been instituted for a will of later date than the one deposited in the deed-chest at his solicitor's.

All, therefore, was now clear; Mr. Maudsley had himself prepared a copy to be formally executed; and sudden death had interfered with his worldly projects. The codicil, (deposited in a secret drawer of a piece of furniture which Arthur recollected to have formerly stood in the room, known by the name of his grandfather's, but which was not likely to have attracted notice during the search, as a place of security) had remained untouched save by

the damps of time, till the officious business of an old nurse accidentally dislodged it from its hiding place!

And now a new difficulty presented itself. If, moved by feelings of deference towards his parent, Arthur resolved to suppress the execution of the deed during the lifetime of Mrs. Armytage, (unless subsequent events rendered such concealment impossible,) how could he demand of his wife a similar resignation of her rights? But why communicate the discovery to Marian?—why disturb *her* peace of mind by tantalizing visions of grandeur?

Alas! might she not be already aware of the existence of the deed?—It was in her hands Arthur had first found the paper. Had she not perused it?—Did she not already know all? Impossible!—So young, so girlish, so feebly-minded, how would she have been able to suppress, even for a moment, the expression of her joy and triumph? And had she not been walking with him, talking with

him, smiling with him, just as usual, for the last three hours? Had she not been prattling of Scarborough and Aunt Robsey—of the roses and the lilies—the thrushes and the blackbirds? Were not her thoughts simple, trivial, and unaspiring as ever? It was clear that she had read the leases, and the recipe for cleansing dog-kennels, but that the codicil had wholly escaped her.

And in this manner do most men pass judgment on their wives!

CHAPTER V.

Fre. See how she steps!
Nought but the native dignity of worth
E'er taught the moving form such noble grace.
Lady. Such lofty mien, and high assumed gait,
I've seen ere now, and men have called it pride.
DE MONTFORT.

ARTHUR ARMYTAGE was angry with himself on perceiving, as he rose the following morning, that a sleepless night had done nothing to tranquillize the flurry of his spirits. He had thought himself endowed with more self-command; yet all the philosophy he could summon to his aid did not prevent him from attempting to shave with the blunt edge of his razor, or from mistaking a green slipper for a Wellington boot. Fortunately he had already locked up in his desk the document

of documents; and resolutely determined to take no further step till the lapse of a week should have restored him to the full exercise of his faculties.

Never had his mother appeared so little amiable in his eyes as during the preceding evening, at the moment he was forming such generous resolutions in her favour. Like others, very many others, whose understanding is superior to their temper, Mrs. Armytage felt angry with herself for her misdoings of the morning, and renewed the offence lest her repentance should become perceptible. She would have given worlds that she had forborne from her injurious treatment of her son; yet still preserved towards him a cold and imperious demeanour. There was something, too, of duplicity in the whole affair of the feast—of hollow and pretended rejoicing, to disguise her own vexation of spirit, which disgusted her with herself. She was even provoked by Marian's discernment in discover-

ing that her presence was not wanted, and her prudence in remaining so quietly at home. "Master Arthur's lady and the little one" had been eagerly and respectfully inquired for by the tenantry — their healths drunk — their names saluted with cheers; for the gaffers and gammers of Holywell were not so deeply studied in the failings of human nature, and the peculiar frailty of their liege lady, as Mr. Wemmersley of Mill-Hill.

Arthur had never smarted under these provocations so keenly before. He determined, however, that no personal feeling should in the slightest degree influence his conduct in the great decision submitted to his judgment. He knew that no temporizing clause exists in the commandments of God, to render honour unto parents a contingent and voluntary duty. However disagreeable to others the imperiousness of his mother's disposition, to *him* the fault must remain sacred.

And, as the days passed on, it seemed as if

the novelty of his situation had awaked a thousand new perceptions in his mind. He had as much fault to find with himself as with Mrs. Armytage. He felt ashamed of the supineness with which he had submitted to dwindle down into a nonentity, and become the slave of accident. In his choice of a profession, in his choice of a wife, in all his comings and goings, he had allowed the fatal charm of subserviency thrown over his childhood, to operate to his disadvantage. In many instances, where his mother's influence must have been inoperative, he had submitted to become the tool of others.

His duties as a representative of the people, for instance, had been adopted without consideration, and executed without zeal; he had hitherto felt himself, in the house, to be a mere feather, blown by a chance wind upon its benches. His political principles were hereditarily harnessed upon him; and as the yoke sat lightly, he had scarcely yet examined into

the materials and fashioning. He had, in short, been depressed, heart, soul, and body, by the consciousness of dependence. His want of importance to others had prevented his feeling of due importance to himself.

But now, all was changed. A new spirit seemed to have entered into his frame. He felt capable of ministering to the general good; of conferring benefits; of promoting improvement. He was no longer a thing to be

> Whirled round in earth's diurnal course,
> With rocks, and stones, and trees.

He might now *remove* rocks, pile stone on stone in goodly architecture, and clothe the waste with plantations. He had the will to do, the power to execute. Something of his mother's spirit was already kindling in his breast. He felt it *was* so; and would check himself and laugh in the midst of his self-communing, as he sauntered, hour after hour, amid the solitudes of Holywell Park.

To seek counsel in his unprecedented dilemma, Arthur felt to be impossible. Unsatisfactorily as he had connected himself, his wife's family did not afford a single adviser in whom he could repose his confidence. His solicitors were his mother's favoured men of business; and, moreover, his difficulty was of too delicate and chivalrous a nature to take refuge in an attorney's office. Lord Rotherham, although a man of easy temper and retiring habits, possessed a peculiar and most rigid sense of justice, which might prompt him as a duty, owing to the son of his deceased friend, to declare all to Mrs. Armytage; while Lord Greta entertained feelings towards that lady, such as could not fail to render him a prejudiced arbitrator. Dr. Grant was absent on his summer tour. The whole weight and responsibility of his determination must rest with himself.

The temptation was a fearful one! On one side, an independent position in society, fif-

teen thousand a year, a noble residence, a thriving and unencumbered estate, rich preferment, county influence, a stake in the country, his wife to be invested with honourable distinction, his sister's settlement in life to be secured; on the other, mortification, subservience, poverty, debt! his wife hourly humiliated, himself daily thwarted. It needed the full force of his conviction, that expulsion from Holywell would cause the death of his mother, to extend his season of deliberation!

Meanwhile, although her husband was too much self-engrossed to notice the fact, poor Marian was not gaining ground among her country neighbours. The Wemmersleys, who had been in the first instance greatly inclined to oppress her with their patronage by way of affronting Mrs. Armytage, withdrew their smiles the moment they found her an object of interest and laudation to their grand idol the Duchess of Spalding; and the childishness of manner which had been once called *naïveté*,

they now styled silliness and vulgarity. Lady Rotherham, not peculiarly gifted with conversational powers, but disposed towards Arthur's wife with almost motherly kindness, found Marian cold and uncommunicative; nor could Lady Laura disguise from her friend Miss Armytage her disappointment in the object of Arthur's choice.

"She is pretty, I admit; fair and delicate, and what common-place people call feminine, meaning vapid and uncharacterized. But who ever saw such a specimen of insensibility?"

"You are mistaken," replied Sophia; too wise to be over-eager in the defence of a person not in fault—"altogether mistaken."

"And then so deficient; so devoid of common understanding!"

"Rather, so uncultivated. Marian has very good sense. She wants nothing but tact."

"The usual want of foolish people."

"Of even wise people, who have not lived

in the world. She will improve in that respect, and so lose the charm of her present delightful simplicity."

"My dearest Sophia!—how long have you been smitten with this extraordinary passion for simpletons?"

"Not for simpletons. I like Mrs. Wommersley as little as ever."

"Come—come—I have hopes of you yet. Mrs. Arthur in only your fool *par préférence*."

"Do not call her fool to me, lest you should get into the habit of calling her so to other people," replied Sophy firmly. "She has so many disadvantages to encounter, that it would be ungenerous of you to join in the outcry against her. Some day or other you will discover her merits, and reproach yourself with want of taste."

"But how am I to discover them? By what art of magnetism am I to rouse the entranced somnambulist?—Mrs. Arthur Army-

tage appears to be half asleep, or rather half alive."

"She is very timid."

"Timid!—I wish you had witnessed the pronounced negative she gave to mamma's invitation, just now!—I never heard a person more positive or more ungracious. Your brother tried to make her fix a day, even a very distant one, for going to Greta Castle:—but 'she was very much obliged to Lady Rotherham; it was out of her power.' Your mother sat looking daggers at her."

"You will admit then," said Sophia smiling, "that Marian has some courage,—some self-possession?"

"The courage possessed by all insensible people,—indifferent to the chance of giving pain."

"How obstinately do you blind yourself, my dear, dear Laura!" exclaimed Miss Armytage,—resolved that not even her zeal in

Marian's behalf should induce her to betray the secret of her sister-in-law's jealousy; which invariably produced so disadvantageous an influence on her manner, in presence of the Greta family. "But we will not dispute about it. I have often quarrelled with your mode of talking of mamma; I must now beg your forbearance towards Marian. Do not let me suppose you incapable of appreciating the excellent qualities of both my nearest relatives."

"Ever pleading the cause of others," cried her friend; "always with an olive branch between your lips!—Well! I confess my own unworthiness. You are sure to end by making me ashamed of myself; and, believe me, you are the only person from whom I could put up with any such humiliation. But you know I look upon you as a sister,—or rather——" she paused, and smiled significantly,—"sister-in-*law*."

"*That* you know is an interdicted chapter between us," said Miss Armytage, colouring deeply.

"Not now, or at least not for ever, I trust," persisted Lady Laura. "Greta has been doing wonders to deserve you. You cannot but be aware how greatly he distinguished himself in Parliament this Session."

"I rejoice to see by the papers—" Sophia began——

"No, no!" cried Lady Laura, impetuously; "you know you did *not* rejoice,—you know you did not care a straw about the matter; although—ungrateful as you are,—you cannot but be aware that you are his Agnes Sorel, and that my brother's exertions to get over his natural indolence are all owing to your exhortations—all owing to his desire to appear favorable in your eyes."

"For *his* sake, I hope *not*. Let us trust that Lord Greta's principles——"

"Principles!—principles!—talk of political principles to a man of five-and-twenty, desperately in love."

"I was not talking of *political* principles," persisted Sophia.

"Well, well, my dear Sophia, I have no doubt you were talking of exactly the right thing, only not exactly at the right moment. You know how forbearing I have been in not plaguing you about Greta;—that little word you once whispered to me about another person, convinced me that my influence would be useless. But now that other person is out of the question——"

"Why out of the question?" inquired Miss Armytage, trying to speak unconcernedly.

Lady Laura looked surprised, but was silent.

"No doubt you were alluding to Mr. Rainsford?" continued Sophia, summoning courage after a minute's pause. "Do you suppose

that his change of fortunes has created any obstacle to ——," she could not proceed. Even between two intimate friends of the same age, the chapter of loves and lovers is fatal to the interests of eloquence.

"Not his change of *fortunes*, my dear Sophia. But I beg your pardon for having touched on the subject. I thought you knew, —I concluded you were aware,—I—— We will talk of it some other time."

"No,—*now* if you please," said Sophia, faintly smiling. "If you beg my pardon, let it be for wishing to drop the subject before you have fully explained yourself."

"Indeed, I have no explanations to make: and must thank my usual giddiness for having hinted any thing to distress you."

"Nothing you have hinted will distress me half so much as the supposition that I do not know all," said Miss Arnytage. "Dear Laura!"

And there was no resisting her look and

tone of supplication. "God forbid that I should do any thing to vex you, my best friend!" said Lady Laura, feelingly; "but I thought your brother had heard all *I* heard on the subject, and had told you all you are determined to learn from *me*. There certainly was a report before we left town, that Mr. Rainsford had come some months ago into a fortune, given up his profession, and was looking out for a wife."

"Was that all?" faltered Sophia, her self-confidence partly returning.

"Not quite all. They said he had formed an attachment for one of Lady Emily Roden's daughters."

"They *said*!—Such absurd things are reported in London!"

"Lady Honoria Spalding, who is cousin to Miss Roden, assured me she was engaged to Mr. Rainsford."

"How often have you admitted to me your

disbelief of every word uttered by the Spaldings!"

"Honoria could have no particular motive for deceiving me. And indeed I heard it from others."

"Others, perhaps, to whom she had related it?"

"I am glad to see you so unpersuadable," said Lady Laura.

"I *am* unpersuadable," replied Miss Armytage. "Where once I give my confidence, I find great difficulty in withdrawing it; particularly where (why should I deny it?) my own happiness is deeply concerned. One thing, however, my dear Laura, pray understand and believe. If this report prove true, no reproach can be attached to Edgar Rainsford. Not a shadow of engagement existed between us. He was perfectly at liberty to—" Sophia grew very pale;—she had not quite strength of mind or body to discuss the matter

as she could wish. But fortunately for her fortitude, they were just then summoned from her dressing-room into the drawing-room by a message from Mrs Armytage. Fresh visiters had arrived; and Sophia was required to do the honours of Holywell to pretty little Rosamond Devonport.

Lady Laura Greta could not sufficiently admire the patient mildness of demeanour with which her friend bestowed her attention on the Maranhams and their protégée. She succeeded in appearing sufficiently interested in one of Miss Avarilla's most tedious metaphysical rhapsodies,—bore smilingly with the coarse raillery of Mistress Di—, inquired kindly after the infirm Margaret,—and entered cheerfully into the girlish chit-chat of Rosamond respecting Mr. Armytage's election ball,—for Sophia was the least selfish person in the world. Reared under the wing of a self-idolatress, she had been fortunate enough

to acquire that best and truest tenet of philosophy, that

> what happiness we justly call,
> Subsists not in the good of one, but all.

She had a really noble mind,—for it made her sensible of her own insignificance.

CHAPTER VI.

> Comes up a fop, (I knew him but by fame,)
> And seized my hand, and call'd me by my name—
> "My dear, how dost?"
>
> HORACE.—SAT. IX.

PEOPLE who take account of *fêtes*, according to their value in the midst of a London season, when the chandeliers are nightly blazing in hundreds of stately mansions, when the bow of Weippert is worn to its last hair, and a perpetual savour of ham and chicken is perceptible in the Gunterian precincts of Berkeley Square, cannot properly appreciate the importance of a ball in a remote provincial neighbourhood, such as that of Thoroton. A ball—an election ball—an election ball, too, involving all the wealth and family importance of the Armytages of Holywell, was a thing to rival

even the charms of the ensuing St. Leger, in the estimation of the younger members of the community.

Now it is a thing of custom in most towns, and especially so at Thoroton, for the crowning honours of the ball to take place immediately after the election, at the Inn wearing its colours and drinking its toasts after the politics of the successful candidate; and the Blue Boar accordingly pretended to the favours of Arthur Armytage. A question materially regarding the interests of the borough, having, however, summoned him to town immediately on his election, before the great event could be achieved, the promised ball was remitted till the close of the session; and now, when it could no longer with propriety be deferred, Mrs. Armytage, from some motive which it would have been difficult to guess, announced her gracious intention that it should take place at Holywell.

Gracious intentions, whether royal, imperial,

or simply simple, are often very inconvenient and ill-timed concessions. Arthur was satisfied that, though his mother might, "for that night only," purpose to put up with the manufacturers' wives, and even the leading tradesmen of the place, who in their turn might feel far more gratified by an invitation to Holywell Park than to the Blue Boar, had not the slightest notion of extending her hospitality to the endless tribe of strange objectionables, with whom an election, like misery, makes a man acquainted. Magnanimity might even induce her to tolerate the presence of his trusty, though not well-beloved Gumption; but the force of patience would no further go. What was to be done? He saw himself on the eve of giving inexpiable offence to his constituents; and yet, even had he found courage to say resolutely that custom must be his law, and the ball-room at the Blue Boar his head-quarters, how could he, just then, command the couple of hundred pounds, the

cost of such an entertainment; which, by this act of opposition, must necessarily fall upon himself? Once more, alas! he allowed himself to become the sport of time and tide; once more he repeated to himself, "I know I am doing wrong, but she must have her own way."

The spacious ball-room at Holywell, situated in what was termed, after its celebrated county architect, the Carr wing of the house, was accordingly opened for the purposes of beautification. The sound of music had not enlivened its coved orchestra since the ball given in honour of the birth of Master Arthur; but now, Turks' heads were brandished, cobwebs dispossessed, the old fashioned lustres and girandoles released from their canvass bags, the polished floor new rubbed, the crimson sofas uncovered. Succession-houses were doubly heated, to bring forward a shew of fruit worthy the horticultural fame of Holywell—everything was to be on a noble scale; and the talisman

of an overflowing purse can work wonders even in an unmiraculous age;—make palm trees yield fruit at St. Petersburgh, and create a brilliant ball in the most rustic of rural regions.

Every one, with the exception of the hero of the event, seemed pleased; every invitation was accepted. The Rotherhams undertook to fill their house for the occasion. The two Maraschams, albeit unused to the festive mood, would neither refuse their young ward the pleasure of a ball, nor their old friend Mrs. Armytage the honour of their company. Marian liked the bustle of the affair, and was gratified to see her husband once more the object of his mother's kindness; and Sophia, whatever secret vexations might be preying on her spirits, was always happy in that which seemed to impart satisfaction to others. She agreed with Arthur, that the Blue Boar might have been the fitter place; but Holywell was incomparably the more agreeable.

It was just five days before the appointed 5th of August, and a covey of white nightcaps was already busily at work in the pastry, when Mrs. Armytage, who was never in such good humour as when her attention was claimed in a thousand directions to command and countermand, had been giving her opinion on the fixing of some new lamps, such as the exigencies of these light-loving times seemed to require in addition to the ancient splendours of the ball-room—when, on her way to the morning room through the conservatory, which formed the main channel of communication from one wing of the house to the other, she was struck by peals of most indecorous laughter—laughter so unrestrained that her formal nature would have decided it to be that of the housemaids, had the housemaids at such an hour been admissible in such a spot.

No!—Mrs. Arthur Armytage was the offender so extravagantly mirthful; and, between the intervals of her gaiety, Mrs. Armytage

discerned the accents of a strange voice. Who could be this very amusing visiter? It is true Marian had been sometimes heard to laugh quite as giddily at the antics of Moreton, but not lately: lately she had become sobered—saddened. Some very unusual excitement must have roused her to so animated a mood. A secret apprehension glanced into Mrs. Armytage's mind that Jack Baltimore had once more made his appearance to claim his share in the festivities of Holywell; and her countenance assumed its fiercest frown of outraged autocracy, as she made her way into the room.

But frowns would have been lost on the individual who occupied a place next to Marian on the sofa; and who, though lounging in a most familiar attitude, on the entrance of the lady of Holywell started up with an affable bow and smile, handed her a chair, begged her not to sit so near the door, and almost did the honours of her own house to the astonished

Mrs. Armytage. Of *him*, indeed, there needed no announcement. The shrug, the grimace, the self-confidence, the black moustache, the flashy waistcoat, were true to the fame of the Parisianized Lord Wyndham Spalding—in whom the most ineffable coxcombry was mingled with something of the tawdry air of a valet-de-chambre or provincial actor.

Miss Armytage, after the compliments of introduction, had already resumed her tapestry; and in the pauses of the visitor's flippant conversation, was pondering within herself *which* was the more offensive—the supercilious, silent, self-concentrated English dandyism of Leicester Spalding, or the vehement, garrulous, gorgeous impertinence of his brother. Between the dandy-couchant, and the dandy-rampant, she decided in favour of the former.

But Winsome Wyn, who, on continental principles, gave the young lady leave to ponder as much as she pleased—considering her silence and her tapestry-frame a matter

of course—afforded no such leisure to Mrs. Armytage. The lady of Holywell was quite personage enough to ensure his patronage—"a bore, in all probability—a woman of neither *la première* nor *la seconde jeunesse*, but still a species of Yorkshire *notabilité*—a person to be noticed."

"I have been congratulating my friend, Mrs. Armytage, on her *villeggiatura*," said he, although he had never uttered a syllable to Marian on the subject. "You have here a very pretty *campagne*—a little wild, perhaps, but positively very pretty. That is what I greatly approve in England. Your country houses do not pretend to *le grand genre*, as in France, where every château is built on the model of the Tuileries, and every garden grows as if planted by Le Nôtre. Here, each small proprietor indulges his own taste, his own whim, and is contented."

Mrs. Armytage, little used to find herself

addressed with praise more applicable to the villa-loving haberdashers of Fulham or Mile-end, was too much astonished to reply. But Lord Wyndham seldom needed a reply.

"The fact is, I so rarely visit Yorkshire, my progresses here are so few and far between, and, *grâces à Dieu!* fewer and further as I grow older and wiser, that I am too apt to invest the country with more than its due share of Gothicism. A man scarcely ever contrives to forget the grievances of the boy—the *corvée* of petticoat government and pedagogue government. Yorkshire is always Spalding Court—barbarous Spalding Court, to *me;* and I dare say my friend Armytage entertains just the same retrospective nausea towards the nursery discipline of Holywell. I remember we used to bless the Regent and the Shire of York together, over our *Châteaux-Margaux* at the *Rocher!*"

Lord Wyndham's rapidity of utterance and

affectedly foreign accent prevented the whole of his *tirade* from reaching the comprehension of Mrs. Armytage—but she heard enough!

"The county of York can dispense, I fancy, with the suffrage of my son," said she.

"'Sparta hath many a worthier son than he!'"

"Oh! pardon me! Arthur is an excellent creature—I have a great opinion of Arthur. I was saying the other night at the Travellers' that Armytage was one of the best of living creatures. He has not done himself justice in town by living *faufilé* in that humdrum *clique* of Rotherhams and Gretas. Well-introduced, Arthur might have taken a place in London, instead of being lost among a drove of country squires—*bon seulement à mugir dans la chambre, comme des bœufs gras*, and never heard of elsewhere. But my friend Arthur cares so little for appearance! By the way, how does he get rid of himself here? He left us *à bride abattue, comme un courier de Rothschild*, the other day, in order to go and act *Le Seigneur de Vil-*

lage among his good and faithful tenantry. Did he play his part with discretion, my dear Mrs. Armytage?—and did the *Bailli* harangue him

> *'Ainsi qu' Alexandre le Grand*
> *A son entrée en Babylone?'"*

And his Lordship proceeded to sing, rather than to say, the opening *couplets* of Boieldieu's opera; while Arthur's mother, unaccustomed to hear her daughter-in-law addressed as "*Mrs.* Armytage," concluded that it was to her majestic self Lord Wyndham's term of endearment had been applied.

"Arthur is excessively fond of shooting," said Marian, feeling that some sort of answer was indispensable. "I think I saw him crossing the park with the keepers after breakfast."

"What sport on earth can the fellow find with the thermometer at 88° in the shade? What does he shoot?—butterflies—humble-bees?"

"Rabbits, I believe," said Marian, well

knowing that Arthur made his gun a pretext for going out early and staying out late.

"Grouse-shooting will begin shortly," added Sophia, "and then my brother will no longer want amusement."

"Grouse? Has he moors here at Holly-Hill? Lucky dog! while I, in penance for my sins, am obliged to forego the pleasantest party in Scotland to do the dutiful at Spalding Court. I shall certainly come and *désennuyer* myself by a few days' shooting with Arthur."

"My moors are preserved; I allow them to be shot upon only every second year," said Mrs. Armytage, calmly.

"If they are small, you are very right, my dear madam," cried Lord Wyndham. "*D'ailleurs*, it is the privilege of all proprietors to *réguler* their little dominions. I remember, once when I was hunting at Chantilly with the Duc de Bourbon—poor old soul!—he had a *bobbery* of a country neighbour who——"

"Is there good hunting at Spalding Court?" interrupted Marian, with a deep blush, dreading the anecdote, and its implied application to Mrs. Armytage.

"Excellent, I believe. But between my father's gout, my absenteeism, and the listlessness of my brothers—the Spalding hounds are chiefly kept for the amusement of the valets and the French cook. All Frenchmen, you know, martyrize themselves with the pretension of being fox-hunters. Do you remember, my dear Mrs. Armytage, poor little Montmorency coming back from Melton last winter with his arm in a sling, and swearing it was an affaire d'*honneur*?"

"Do you mean the little duke who was always singing at Lady Arabella's?"

"Exactly; one of her thousand and one knights. Poor dear Lady Arabella! What a good creature it is! Her face is her fortune—like the *laitière's* in the song! Half the world swears that a woman with the physiognomy of

a white negro cannot have been a *femme gu-lante;* while the other half protests that a woman who has had so many *adorateurs* cannot have been always ugly. And so—*à quelque chose malheur est bon!*—she comes to pass for a beauty and a Lucretia."

Mrs. Armytage, to whom the slightest tone of libertinism was an offence, was now so greatly disgusted, that an exclamation, audibly contemptuous, broke from her lips, and reminded Lord Wyndham of her presence.

"But amid all this *bavardage*," cried he, suddenly addressing her, "I forget half my errand here. You behold in me, my dear madam, a herald—the bearer of a flag of truce—from the house of Spalding. The Duchess (who is really a very well-natured woman, though I admit often tiresome enough) is apprehensive that you do not intend to invite her to your ball: and my sisters are *en désespoir.*"

"I should hardly presume," replied Mrs

Armytage, with proud humility, "to invite to an entertainment given in honour of my son's return to Parliament, the family of the defeated candidate."

"Excellent, excellent!—what a truly primitive and Great-British idea!" exclaimed Lord Wyndham, caressing his moustaches, and laughing heartily. "How deeply it would amaze my brother Leicester to hear you!—he who, I dare say, totally forgets that he ever stood for Thoroton; or, more likely still, fancies he was returned. Leicester is the most *insouciant* of listless men!"

"I have never, however, perceived any indifference on the part of the Duchess of Spalding, towards the electioneering interests of the family," said Mrs. Armytage, drily.

"Perhaps not,—while the excitement of the canvass lasted! But in my mother's position, excitements succeed each other so rapidly!—probably the very next week her feelings were just as much roused in trying to outbid the

Zoological Society, at some brute sale in the London Docks, for a Tapir, or a Jeribo, for the menagerie at Spalding Castle. After all, what signifies a seat in Parliament to a fellow like Leicester, unless he could get a dispensation for his valet to frank for him and hold his proxy? For my friend Armytage it *might* do something—perhaps get him made a Baronet."

"A Baronet!—Arthur Armytage of Holywell, whose grandfather had twice refused a Peerage!"

"Would it not be a considerable distance for the Duchess to come to a ball?" inquired Marian, hoping to divert her mother-in-law's attention.

"*That* is all arranged. The worthy Wemmersley people, at whose house I slept last night, and who seem to keep a sort of Spalding Arms whenever beds are in request, have invited the family to make a convenience

of them on this as on all other occasions. The Duchess was obliged to plead guilty of non-invitation. But as the days of Whig and Tory (praise to Heaven!) are as obsolete as the times of Guelph and Ghibelline, we trust, my dear madam, that you will ratify a general peace, by enabling me to bear back a formal invitation."

"If, under such circumstances, the Duchess of Spalding will condescend to visit me,"—answered Mrs. Armytage, secretly pleased with the prospect of seeing her Grace confounded among the crowd of Thorotonians, without having compromised her own dignity by an invitation;—"I shall feel greatly honoured."

"My diplomacy being ended then," cried he, rising to depart, "I have only to order my horse, offer you my homage, and make my way back to Mrs. Wemmersley, who is waiting to drive me home, and complete her arrangements with the Duchess. What am

I to say to my mother in answer to *her* invitation?" he inquired, lowering his tone as he addressed Marian.

"That we will be with her on the tenth," replied Mrs. Arthur.

"*Définitivement?*"

"*Définitivement!*"

"Enchanted to be the bearer of such good news. Farewell!—*au revoir!*—At what o'clock on the 5th?" added he, addressing Mrs. Armytage as he passed her towards the door.

"At any hour you please. Good morning." And his Lordship's parting bow was scarcely complete, or the door closed after him, before she ejaculated, "The most insupportable person I ever beheld in my life!" and, as if her irritation had been too long repressed, made her way straight through the folding windows, and was soon seen at a distance pacing with rapid steps the shrubbery walk.

"Will it not seem rather ungracious, my dear Marian, that you should go to Spalding

Court, so soon after excusing yourself to Lady Rotherham?" observed Sophy, when she found herself alone with her sister-in-law.

"I dare say Lady Rotherham will never trouble her head on the subject. She probably invited me only as a matter of ceremony, in the due course of country neighbourhood."

"I think not; I am sure she was sincerely anxious to make the acquaintance of my brother's wife."

The phrase was an unlucky one. Marian's sensibility was touched in a minute.

"Exactly!—those were the precise grounds on which I was to be admitted to Greta Castle; but they were not the only ones that decided me to stay away. Lady Rotherham is a very tiresome woman, who can talk only of her own health; and Lady Laura I consider very disagreeable; so abrupt—so examining—so careless of giving pain. In short, I cannot endure a single member of the family!"

"I trust you will alter your opinion," an-

swered Sophia, mildly; "for as our old and intimate friends, you are likely to see a great deal of the family."

"I never *shall* like them," retorted Marian.

"Are you quite sure that you are not using *shall* in its Irish sense? Do you not mean that you never *will*?"

"Well, then, I never *will*!" cried Marian, with a degree of positiveness wholly foreign to her character: "and I shall make it a condition with Arthur that he never forces me into their society. Do not be angry with me," said she, taking Sophia's hand, when she saw her sister-in-law vexed and surprised by this unusual display of petulance: "I cannot help it: you know I have not tact enough to conceal my faults or my feelings."

CHAPTER VII.

"Prythee, Trim," quoth my Uncle Toby, "what dost thou mean by honouring thy father and thy mother?"

"Allowing them, an't please your honour, three halfpence a-day out of my pay, when they grow old."

"And didst thou do that, Trim?" said Yorick.

"He did indeed," replied my Uncle Toby.

"Then, Trim," said Yorick, springing out of his chair, and taking the Corporal by the hand, "thou art the best commentator upon that part of the Decalogue; and I honour thee more for it, Corporal Trim, than if thou hadst a hand in the Talmud."

STERNE.

THE eve of the ball was now at hand; and the adroit Mademoiselle Célestine had prepared for her lady, and her lady's sister, simple white dresses, exactly alike, which she protested became them "*à ravir*." Arthur was pleased to see Marian so readily cured of her taste for finery, and to observe so happy a spirit of unanimity prevailing between his sister and his

wife. Still, it occurred to him that the bride of Arthur Armytage of Holywell ought to make a somewhat more matronly appearance than the young lady of the house; and without wishing Marian to be finer, he would have been glad to have enabled her to appear more *richly* attired. In short, she had no jewels,—nothing but the tawdry, ill-set, sprawling topaz necklace, the wedding-gift of the Robseys, which her own improved taste kept closely ensconced within its morocco case. For half a day Arthur resolved to write to town for a few handsome ornaments for his wife. But how to account to his mother for so ill-advised an act of prodigality?

The night previous to the ball, however, when, having repented, he had also forgotten his resolution, Mrs. Armytage made her appearance in the drawing-room with two jewel-cases of similar dimensions in her hand; and Marian, looking up from her work, as one of them, being opened by her mother-in-law, displayed

a suit of costly brilliants, involuntarily uttered an exclamation concerning their beauty and resplendence.

"They are yours," said Mrs. Armytage, in her driest tone.

"*Mine?*" reiterated Marian, half startled and half annoyed.

"Yours—and this similar set, my dear Sophia, is for *you*."

Arthur's attention was now attracted from the book he was reading. He looked inquiringly towards the family group.

"It is now some years since I found occasion to wear my family jewels," resumed Mrs. Armytage, speaking to no one in particular, though virtually addressing her son: "but although too old to take pleasure in diamonds, I am not old enough to have lost my pleasure in *life*. I intend to live many years, and will therefore no longer deny myself the gratification of seeing these baubles worn by others. The fashion of the setting was old and heavy.

Nothing had been done to them since the time of my great-great-grandmother, Lady Clarissa Maudsley. But Rundell seems to have done them justice. The sets are exactly alike, and naturally belong to my two children."

Both Marian and Sophia were silent. Each expected the other to speak. There was something chilling in the preconcerted formality of this address. The gift, instead of assuming the interest of a token of affection, appeared rather to be a legal act of donation.

Arthur stammered out a few expressions of gratitude in the name of his wife. The specification of an exact division of her property between her two children, jarring against his secret knowledge of the untenability of her own claims, confused and distressed him. Mrs. Armytage was disposing of family heirlooms, which, even if lawfully her own, ought, as a matter of propriety, to have become the property of the wife of her son; but, under the

true circumstances of the case, her pompous benefaction appeared a mockery.

"But my dear mother," said Sophia, injudiciously enough, but unable to repress her consciousness of being the object of an inequitable distribution, "it would give me infinitely greater pride and pleasure that these family jewels should not be divided. Till I am married, they form an improper ornament for me. If I marry advantageously, I shall receive such gifts from my husband's family; or, if I marry poorly, which is far more likely, it would ill become me to display anything so magnificent. Pray allow me to place the two shares once more together."

"My dearest Sophy!" exclaimed Arthur, conscious that his disinterested sister was defrauded of property of far greater value by his own wilful act and deed,—"Can you for a moment suppose that Marian will not feel doubly gratified in wearing my mother's splen-

did presents by knowing that you have been equally the object of her generosity? You wrong us both if you do not believe that we fully coincide in her just distribution."

Sophia dared not reply. She saw her mother greatly displeased by the mode in which her gifts were received: her daughter rebelling against her donation—her son sanctioning and confirming it. For although Mrs. Armytage thought nothing of her own sacrifice of the family jewels, intrinsically, she thought much of her right of disposing of them; and of the opportunity it conveyed to mark to her children her power, if not her intention, to bequeath the whole bulk of her property in equal shares between them.

"I am sorry," she coldly observed, "that you should any of you think it necessary to canvass the equity or propriety of a gift of mine. I flattered myself no dispute would or could arise on a point where my own will and inclination must necessarily give the law."

"None does or will arise!" cried Arthur, hoping to dispel the storm by giving a lively turn to the discussion, "except between these two young ladies, as to the comparative becomingness of their necklaces." And opening the cases, he busied himself in adorning his wife and sister with their new jewels. The blush with which Marian looked towards Mrs. Armytage, when her magnificent tiara sparkled in her fair hair, certainly proved that diamonds can be very becoming. To Sophia's subdued countenance they imparted no enhancement. She was really distressed by an occurrence which she felt to be an act of injustice towards her brother.

"Do not say another word on the subject, my dearest sister," said Arthur, when, on her mother's quitting the room, she ventured to give utterance to her regrets. "Very many reasons, which you must excuse me from detailing, render this division of the jewels the only circumstance that could reconcile me to

seeing them worn by Marian during the lifetime of my mother."

And this was strictly true. The family diamonds, valued at thirty thousand pounds, were expressly specified, with plate, furniture, and pictures, among the property entailed by old Maudsley upon his grandson; and Arthur was truly gratified that his sister should by this means receive some compensation for the deprivation he was inflicting upon her.

Nevertheless the affair gave rise to many disagreeable reflections. Arthur felt apprehensive that similar scenes might hereafter occur in the family, rendering the secret of which he was the depositary a still more painful burthen. He began to be alarmed at his own responsibility. How could he foresee to what extent Mrs. Armytage might take upon herself the alienation of the family property; or in what measure her wilfulness and caprice might render him hereafter accountable to heirs of his own? Already he had suffered a

week to elapse, in addition to that he had originally allowed himself for decision; and although every day and every hour added to his conviction that degradation from her present high estate of supremacy would be fatal to his mother, still his resolution wavered.

The greater part of the night succeeding the bestowal of the diamonds, Arthur Armytage gave to reflection. Night is a season favourable to nobleness of purpose. "The world is" then *not* "too much with us;" and our moral responsibility to God and man assumes a more demonstrated form. We are not ashamed of aspiring after virtue. There is no human sneer to wither our good intentions; no glitter of pompous illusions to dazzle the clearness of our perceptions; right and wrong resume the tangible and stedfast land-marks of their empire.

On the following day, therefore, while the gardeners were hurrying along the corridors of Holywell, arranging stands of exotics,—

footmen, unpowdered and jacketless, swearing at the housemaids, who could only scold them in return—cooks pounding over their mortars, and old Simmons groaning over the incalculable inroads into his beloved cellar—Arthur Armytage drew the precious document from his bureau; and without trusting himself to a re-perusal, enveloped and re-enveloped—sealed and re-sealed it;—mounted his horse, and rode off to Greta Castle.

"My dear Lord Rotherham," said he, having requested a private interview with his father's friend—"I am come to demand a favour at your hands. Take charge of this packet for me in your family-deed chest, for it is of consequence to others besides myself; and promise me that whatever instances I may hereafter use to persuade you to give it up to me during the lifetime of my mother, you will be inflexible to my demand."

"Refuse a man possession of his own property?"—cried Lord Rotherham, laughing.

"Why, my dear friend Arthur, you are beside yourself."

But Arthur could not laugh in return. He was deeply impressed by the act of duty he was performing.

"I conclude," resumed Lord Rotherham, "that the importance of the paternal estate has induced you to make your will?—Quite right. But do not follow the fancy of most young people, and imagine that, because you have made your will, you have taken a step towards the grave! Make me your Custos Rotulorum, or your executor, or what you will—even guardian, to little Miss Harriet Armytage, if you choose; though I am somewhat old now for such an office;—but don't put so serious a face upon the matter."

Arthur tried to throw off his oppression of spirits; tried to smile; tried to enjoy the rallying of his old friend; but it would not do. "At all events," said he, "tell me, my dear Lord, that you accede to my request!"

"But you may hereafter desire to alter this will—to revoke—to cancel it!"

"Not likely," said Arthur, unable to explain away Lord Rotherham's delusion.

"You cannot tell. You are at the age, Arthur, when a man thinks every new resolution irrevocable, and takes not into account the unforeseen contingencies of life,—the expediences,—the——"

"Believe me this is a case with which no event, hereafter occurring, can interfere."

"My dear boy, no such case can exist in human life! I have no doubt that your proposition is motived by the most upright intentions—by self-mistrust—which, in matters of pecuniary interest, becomes a virtue. But do not attempt to shackle yourself by unnecessary bonds. Be a free agent; leave the control of your conduct to the firmness of your own principles. I talk to you, Arthur, as I would to a son of my own."

"I know it,—I feel it,—" said young Army-

tage, extending his hand to so considerate a counsellor; "and I am unfortunately not at liberty to lay before you the premises on which I know you would ground a different conclusion. I will, however, at your suggestion, modify my terms. Promise me that you will never restore me the packet, unless you consider, on hearing the motive of my application, that I am in honour and equity entitled to demand it?"

"You become more and more mysterious. So much, however, I think I may concede without danger to either of us. Meanwhile, I will, if you please, endorse the paper with your conditions, and our mutual signatures. After which I shall briefly state, in an envelope, the circumstances of the deposit; that in case of my demise, it may recur to your possession."

"Rather remain in the hands of my friend Greta, on the same terms," added Arthur.

"Well, well!—*that* you shall settle be-

tween you when I am dead and gone," said Lord Rotherham. "You seem terribly afraid of yourself,—and it seems I cannot put you into heart." And when, after endorsing the document with the terms proposed, he turned from his writing-table to put the pen into Arthur's hand, and saw him looking pale and agitated, he added, "My dear fellow, I shall begin to fancy that your packet is something of the Caleb Williams sort, and that it contains the confession of a murder!"

"Not exactly," was the faint reply. "If it were connected with any thing blameable or dishonourable, I should scarcely seek such a depositary as my father's friend."

"And now that our mysterious business is over," said his Lordship, having lodged the packet in the iron closet in his private library, "pray tell me, have you not chosen to make a day of pleasure a day of business? Is not this the night of the Holywell ball?"

"It is."

"I concluded so, because my son has managed to get his Treasury holidays a week before his time. I expect Greta from town this afternoon; and on the 11th, you know, he is off to the Moors."

"I did *not* know:—but I am very glad to hear he is coming, even for so short a time."

"He has taken Lochvarlach for the season, with Lord Edward Brereton and young Dumbarton. They are coming down together."

"And to Holywell to-night, of course?"

"Of course. Laura no doubt has taken care to secure herself partners; and unless you bespeak your sister for Greta, I fancy he will be sadly mortified. They don't get on quite so well together as I could wish.—Eh! Arthur?"

"I believe we had better leave them to settle their own affairs," said Arthur, now really smiling; for he was pleased by Lord Rotherham's explicit avowal of interest in the match. "Interference always does harm."

"I fear so!" replied the kind-hearted father, secretly referring to the injudicious interference which, he little doubted, had been the means of preventing Arthur from becoming his son-in-law. "But you had better stay and dine here, Armytage?—You will only be in the way at Holywell, and get a bad dinner. A ball is fatal to all comfort and quiet!—better stay and dine here, and join the early detachment of our party?—Lady Rotherham and Laura, I know, are to be at Holywell in time to air the rooms."

Arthur excused himself. "He feared he might be wanted at home."

"Not *you!*—My friend Mrs. Armytage is the last person to need assistance in her arrangements. She will be very glad to get rid of you."

Again Arthur excused himself: but when, half an hour afterwards, as he was sitting with Lady Rotherham and her daughter, his friend Greta and the rest of the London party made

their appearance, he became more persuadeable. Arthur had been living of late almost exclusively among women. He was tired of tapestry, nursery, white satin, and diamonds; and eager to chat of politics and clubs,—horses and dogs,—Mantons and moors,—and all the other toys of manhood. Nothing now appeared so easy as to send back his horse and groom, with a verbal message to Marian—"His love—he had been detained to dine at Greta Castle. He should return home early to dress."

CHAPTER VIII.

Within, 'twas brilliant all and light,
A thronging scene of figures bright,
As when the setting sun has given
Ten thousand hues to summer's even;
And, from their tissue, Fancy frames
Aërial knights and fairy dames.

SCOTT.

EVEN in an establishment so regular as that of the Rotherhams, the routine of punctuality is not secure from accident. Dinner had been ordered an hour earlier than usual, in compliment to the Holywell ball. But the four young men had unluckily thought fit to make the tour of the stables and kennels, and pass sentence on the Dons and Pontos who were to set forward with their servants towards the Highlands on the following day. And then,

Lord Dumbarton was a dandy, and insisted on a bath after the fatigues of a journey and the vapours of the stables; and, from one indiscretion to another, dinner was kept waiting, and the cook, as well as the turbot, in hot water.

Lady Rotherham's carriage, too, was ordered for half-past seven; but it was eight before Arthur quitted the dining-room, and they had still an hour's drive before them.

"I fear we are late, Mr. Armytage," said the good-humoured Lady R., as he assisted her into the carriage; "but I will take all upon myself with your mother."

"Nevertheless," added Lady Laura, laughing, "if the people should be arrived, and the ball begun?"

"Don't talk of such a thing!" exclaimed Arthur; and he began to rejoice in the excellence of Lord Rotherham's horses. "At all events, the ball cannot commence till I make

my appearance, for I understand it is necessary for me to open it."

"Your wife rather, I should imagine," said Lady Laura.

"No," interrupted her ceremonious mother, "not unless your brother member were here to be her partner. It is for the new member to open the ball, with the lady of the highest rank present."

"That, thank Heaven! will be yourself," said Arthur, turning to Lady Laura.

"Fie, fie!—What would the Duchess of Spalding say if she heard you?—You forget Honoria and Amabel?"

"I wish I could!—I would as soon dance with my wife's poodle! No!—If they arrive in time, I shall choose to understand that I am to dance with the Mrs. Mayoress of Thoroton. At my election ball, *she* must necessarily be the first and fairest."

"You might have chosen a more disagree-

able person," said Lady Laura. "The Mrs. Mayoress of the year is the wife of the great stocking-weaver, who has done so much good to the poor of Thoroton; and a remarkably pretty, pleasant woman. She dined the other day at the castle, and we found her a great acquisition to the party."

A turn of the road leading to the spot where, on his return home from Spalding Court, Arthur had given way to such singular presentiments, now brought them to a distant view of Holywell. A stream of light blazed from its windows. The illumination of the house was complete! Lady Rotherham kindly directed Arthur to hasten her coachman. But, alas! as they approached the house, they found themselves in a string of carriages proceeding at the foot's pace indispensable to afford young ladies time for due care of their blonde and blush roses, in alighting at the scene of display. Arthur wisely determined to gain the

house on foot; and, somewhat less than five minutes having enabled him to complete his toilet, he entered the ball-room at one door, just as Lady Rotherham and her daughter arrived at the other. But, alas! his offences were already numbered!—His mother, in a most majestic and Mahomedan turban, looked as awful as if fresh from the massacre at Scio, and frowned her silent reproaches. Poor Arthur was bowed to and curtsied to—congratulated—thanked—his hands shaken—his health inquired after; but, all the time, he scarcely knew whose bows he was returning—whose civilities reciprocating. Young, handsome, prosperous, popular member as he was, his feelings were engrossed by apprehensions of an explosion of anger from Mrs. Armytage.

"Are the Spaldings arrived?" he inquired of Sophia, whose soothing smile was the first agreeable object that struck him in the ball-room.

"Not yet."

"Thank Heaven!—Lady Laura, it seems I am privileged to claim your hand."

"You forget the Lady Mayoress?"

"No, no!—She was only my *pis-aller* against Lady Honoria. Sophy, go, like a good creature, and inquire of my mother if she wishes the dancing to begin. *I* dare not accost her at present."

"She does. She has just ordered the band to play. There!—Lead your partner to the top of the room."

And it was not till he had elbowed a way for Lady Laura Greta through the crowd, and placed her at the head of the set rapidly forming, that Arthur found himself opposite to Marian. Marian, all elegance, all brilliancy, all beauty—prettier, a thousand times, than he had ever seen her look before! She was pale, indeed,—unusually pale; but that might arise from the glare of the lights, or the reflection of her resplendent diamonds. He was about to advance and take her hand, but Lady Laura

was already in the act of greeting; and, turning to his wife's partner, he was astonished to perceive Lord Wyndham Spalding!

"*You* here, my dear fellow,—and so early?" was his involuntary exclamation.

"*Reviez-vous*—I don't wonder!" answered Winsome Wyn; "for I am actually going to perpetrate, *tant bien que mal*, an English *contre-danse*; a feat which I have never attempted since we used to be called at Eton into old Birch's parlour on state occasions, to stand up with *les Demoiselles Birch*."

Marian's pale face was just now again visible; but Arthur had only a moment to nod and smile. The band played, the dance commenced; and all was shoving and shuffling, panting and poussetting; everything which the customs of our forefathers conjured up to render a ball-room a place of hard labour and penance. A minute's space necessarily ensued before Lord Wyndham and his partner followed the leaders of the race—just long

enough to enable Arthur's wife to overhear the exclamations of the idle throng behind her—"Lady Laura and young Armytage!"—"What a handsome couple!"—"*I* always thought they would have made a match?"—"Yes! *that* would have been quite a Yorkshire wedding—quite a suitable connexion!"

She looked again, and admitted the truth of the remark. Yes! they were indeed a well-assorted couple! Lady Laura's tall and finely-formed figure, her rich dark hair and look of distinction, accorded well with the noble person and gentlemanly, unaffected manners of Arthur. Everybody in the room, no doubt, must see them as she saw them. All his friends must sympathize with Mrs. Armytage's regret that Lady Laura was not her daughter-in-law, and, in contempt for her insignificant self, tears came into her eyes,

"And her ears tingled, and her colour fled;"

and, under this disadvantageous aspect, it became her task to lead down the dance, and

attract, for the first time, the criticisms of her country neighbours. It was natural for a person so timid to attach to herself the scarcely repressed titter and whispers of contempt that followed her movements. *She* saw not the looks of wonder and ridicule directed towards the elaborate affectations of her partner, whose studs of pendent pearls, red velvet waistcoat, and glittering guard-chain, gave him in the eyes of the unsophisticated Thorotonians the air of a mountebank. *She* heard not the interrogatories that followed—"Who is the young lady with whom that strange coxcomb is dancing?"—"Don't you *know*?—our Member's wife!"—"Well, I protest, I never saw a more modest, elegant little woman!"

But though Marian heard not the praises lavished on herself, Miss Armytage heard; and, hearing with delight and pride, was vexed to perceive with how much more graciousness than was desirable Mrs. Arthur received the attentions of her partner. The motive, So-

phia perfectly understood; and made due allowance for Marian's shyness, and desire to disguise it by conversing familiarly with the only individual in the room with whom she was much acquainted. The same cause which induced Arthur to talk and laugh with Lady Laura, prompted his wife to chat and smile with the grimacing dandy, whose jargon reminded her of the pleasures and amusements of the preceding winter, ere her Holywell mortifications had been conjured up around her. The wives and daughters of her husband's constituents were, however, less indulgent than his sister.

Things went still worse when Marian arrived at the bottom of the dance, for *there* she felt quite unequal to retain her place by the side of Lady Laura;—Lady Laura—for the enjoyment of whose society her husband had deserted her at the trying moment of welcoming his guests; exposing her to the painful consciousness of his neglect at the time when *his*

presence and her own presence of mind were needed most. Instead, therefore, of following the obligation imposed on all honourable contra-dancers of "dancing up" in their turn—to the importance of which Lady Laura's provincial experience rendered her duly sensible,—away she went with Lord Wyndham,—on the plea of requiring rest; and during the remainder of the set, they occupied a quiet corner of the ball-room, and a considerable share of the observation of its guests.

So engrossed did they appear with each other, that no one ventured to approach them, till the remainder of the Greta Castle party made their appearance—when Lord Dumbarton, an intimate Paris acquaintance of both, came to demand the hand of Marian for the quadrille which they hoped would follow the set demanded as a sacrifice to country customs. A minute afterwards, Arthur came to whisper a request to Marian, in the name of his mother, that she would dance the second dance with

the Mayor of Thoroton, whom she had already once refused, on the grounds of a long-standing engagement to Lord Wyndham. But a jealous wife is not particularly accessible to persuasion. Marian declared herself again engaged; protested she would not dance with the Mayor, would not join another contra-dance; and after various remonstrances against the affront thus offered to the man in authority, Arthur Armytage observed to Lord Greta, who was standing by—

"Sophia volunteered to be his partner for the first set. Do, my dear Greta, ask your sister to honour him with her hand for the next. Or stay, I will go and make the request myself—I am sure Lady Laura will not refuse me."

Marian turned a deaf ear, but not a hardened heart, to this free admission of his influence. But she had no leisure for mortification. At that moment, the Duchess of Spalding, who had just entered the room, flew with extended hands to greet her,—all

smiles and courtesy,—evidently determined to make and consider her the leading personage of the evening. Leaning on her arm, the great lady, whom the Wemmersley's affectation of late hours had compelled to arrive two hours too late, pressed her way through the ball-room in search of Mrs. Armytage; who had already deserted her post of reception, in order to be more particular in her attentions to her Thoroton guests. For it was not in playing the hostess that her foible made itself apparent. Her manners on public occasions were marked by the dignified simplicity of a perfect gentlewoman. In her mode of receiving the *maniérée* and restless Duchess, the superiority of Mrs. Armytage was strikingly perceptible.

Meanwhile, the sudden blazing forth of the Mill Hill party did not tend to increase the hilarity of the evening:—the arrival of the great people of the neighbourhood in a country ball-room seldom does. For a moment their

appearance engrosses general attention. The provincials begin to admeasure themselves by a new standard; and, well content with their own attractions a minute before, now decide themselves to be well or ill dressed, as they more or less resemble the idols of the hour. The Duchess was attired in a perfectly plain white satin dress, with a profusion of magnificent diamonds:—the country ladies, who, having no magnificent diamonds, had made themselves tawdry in striving to be splendid,—began to be heartily ashamed of their frippery,—felt uneasy, and looked cross.

Then Mrs. A. left off talking to her neighbour Mrs. B., lest she should lose the opportunity of attracting a passing bow from her Grace; while Mrs. B. looked glumpily away, lest her spinster neighbour Miss C. should suspect her of being servilely ambitious of aristocratic patronage. All who had voted against Lord Leicester Spalding, fancied the Duchess must bear them a grudge;—all who

did not happen to visit Mrs. Wemmersley, trembled lest the Duchess should vote them ungenteel. Most of the parties present felt far less comfortable than before she entered the room.

And then the really pretty, but finical, fluttering, fanciful ladies Amabel and Honoria, were immediately taken up with Lord Edward Brereton and Lord Greta; and made off in quest of Lady Laura, not because they liked or admired her, but because she was the only person present with whom they could keep up the free-masonries of *caste;* and although the high-minded Laura, far better pleased to converse with her entertaining well-informed partner, the mayor, strove to extricate herself from the group, all the fine people stood apart laughing and chatting together,—as if winnowed from the surrounding chaff,—returning, with most overstrained affability, the tokens of recognition somewhat too obsequiously bestowed upon them by the females of the

Yorkshire squires; and standing ostentatiously aside whenever any one attempted to pass them,—as much as to say—"for worlds do not let me afford you an opportunity of saying that a person of *my* consequence condescended to treat you with incivility!" Mrs. Wemmersley meanwhile, her vanity buoyant beyond all control, kept fluttering like a butterfly round the knot of exclusives;—the pink feathers of her toque in perpetual motion, and her whole countenance illuminated by the reflection of ducal sunshine!

How different all this from the rational cheerfulness and companionableness of the Gretas,—from the mild conciliation of Sophia Armytage! Yet Marian saw it otherwise! Marian was captivated by the eager attentions that seemed to raise her into importance; exhilarated by the gabble of artificial gaiety, which re-assured the timidity of her nature. She even managed to forget Mrs. Armytage, while she listened to the prattling folly of

Lady Honoria and her brothers,—the lively quizzing of Lord Edward Brereton, the soothing flatteries of the Duchess. The three hundred ill-natured persons present were nothing to her now. Arthur and Lady Laura could not fail to see that there *were* those who admired and sought her. Her colour and her spirits rose. She looked very pretty and behaved very foolishly. The neglected Thorotonians, having for half an hour adored the Spaldings, and another half hour admired them, soon began to criticise,—to blame, to feel affronted. Long before supper was announced they had decided among themselves that Mrs. Arthur Armytage was a giddy young woman;—totally disqualified for the wife of a popular member.

The supper-table is, however, a marvellous redresser of grievances and soother of woes—"Tired nature's boon restorer, balmy Champagne," dulcifies the tide of human bitterness: and while turkey-poults, tongues, jellies,

peaches, and nectarines disappeared, public serenity was for a time restored. Arthur Armytage circulated round the tables like a postman, taking care that his constituents were attended to; while the Duchess, and the dandies, and the member's wife, and all the rest of their tribulations, were happily hidden from the view by the towering bouquets of the gold plateau vases at the head of the room. All began to admit that they were better off than at the Blue Boar, and that the entertainment did honour to the hospitality of Mrs. Armytage of Holywell.

New clouds, however, were gathering. A contra-dance after supper was felt to be a national duty; but behind those fatal vases a plot had been already concocted by the recondites for rewarding their previous self-denial, not by a quadrille, but a galoppe. The two fair Spaldings, Marian, Mrs. Wemmersley, and two or three London-going belles of the neighbourhood, were gallopers, which would form a

sufficient party—the perfect audacity of several of the aspirants duly considered. But the exotic dance, now for the first time introduced to Thoretonian admiration, seemed to strike consternation into all beholders. It was like the bursting of a thunderstorm. Tender mothers began to gather their chickens under their wings, and elderly gentlemen to shrug their shoulders. Mrs. Armytage, petrified that any one should have interfered with the march of the evening's amusements, was doubly paralyzed by the first aspect of the dance, and by beholding her daughter-in-law among the most expert of the rompers. She stood awful and severe as a statue of Nemesis!

"My dearest Laura," whispered Sophia to her friend, "I know you sometimes gallop at Almack's. Do pray stand up to-night, and Mamma will cease to discern anything objectionable in the dance. I see she is greatly displeased with Marian."

"Willingly, if I can find your brother. I never gallop with strangers."

"There he is, talking to Marian;" and away went Sophia to invite Arthur, in his wife's hearing and in the name of her friend, to become the partner of Lady Laura.

Marian immediately turned away, and began flirting, in a hurried manner, with Lord Wyndham. Unluckily, in the next breathless pause of their gallope, they anchored close to Mrs. Armytage, who was receiving the parting compliments of the Mayoress.

"Positively this little interlude of civilization is quite refreshing, my dear Madam," said Lord Wyndham, judiciously interrupting them. "And yet I am assured our Heathons are somewhat scandalized? *Pauvres chers innocens!—ça fait hausser les épaules!*"

"It does indeed!" said Mrs. Armytage, affecting to misunderstand him. "A more disgusting exhibition I never witnessed. In

this country—in this county—I am not apprehensive of seeing it naturalized."

"Probably not, probably not," was the flippant reply. "*En fait de morale,* the English so grievously mistrust themselves, that they are forced to rely for security, like the people of Holland, against an inundation of wickedness, upon dykes so vastly high and ponderous, that one might as well live in a sawpit. *On s'ecrase par la pésanteur de ses vertus!*"

To evade all chance of a reply, away he went whirling poor Marian into the vortex; while Mrs. Armytage's attention was soon taken up with the faint adieus of poor, tired Lady Rotherham, who had already bespoken the Thoroton apothecary to visit her on the morrow. Other departures followed; and the ill-assorted party broke up some hours earlier than is customary on similar occasions.

The last provocation received by Mrs. Ar-

mytage that evening, was some particularly private whispering between the Duchess of Spalding and Marian, as they bade each other a tender farewell at parting.

CHAPTER IX.

You are more saucy with lords and honourable personages, than the heraldry of your birth and virtues gives you commission.

SHAKSPEARE.

THE day following a ball at home is usually a day of bitterness, headache, and mortification. Faded garlands, fragments of broken glasses, the smell of lamp-oil, the memory-haunting grunt of the violoncello, sleepy footmen, awkward supernumeraries—conspire to render the house insupportable. Holywell had not often been so disorganized in its economy as on the 6th of August. Simmons and his aged contemporaries, in spite of all the foreign aid afforded to their labours, were most of them ill in bed. The assistants down from town

were drunk with Yorkshire ale—nothing was right. Mrs. Armytage, thoroughly discomposed, inveighed against the disorderliness of modern servants. Arthur thought of the Blue Boar, and held his peace.

Other disagreeables, too, became gradually evident. Gumption and many of the leading Thorotonians, had absented themselves from the ball, and without even sending excuses. Honoured in their own persons by an invitation, they had been offended in that of some uncle or cousin accidentally omitted. Others, who pretended to rigour of political principles, came only to display their indignation at the presence of the Spalding family. The attorney who had lampooned the Duchess at the last election, and the attorney's partner who had caricatured her, felt themselves insulted by having been betrayed into the presence of their victim.

There had been a fight, moreover, among the servants, in drawing up the carriages, in which one of the Holywell stable-men had

broken his arm; and scarcely was the late breakfast over, when the apothecary asked an audience of Mrs. Armytage, to inform her that Jack Aldworth, having a contusion on his head, and the fumes of much punch within it, was in a high fever, and delirious; while at the same moment Mr. Wemmersley was ushered into the drawing-room to congratulate Mrs. Armytage on the brilliant success of her ball. "He was grieved, however, to find from Mr. Senna, whom he had met on the road, that poor Lady Rotherham was laid up with a severe rheumatism, from the draughts in the supper-room; and that a panel of the Mayor's new landau had been broken. But all these were trifles."

Mrs. Armytage, a good, though not indulgent mistress, was just then too much preoccupied by the danger of her servant, the son of an old tenant, to care for coach-panels or aristocratic finger-aches. She did not think the amusement of three hundred idle individuals

cheaply purchased by the life of one poor groom; and was deeply concerned for Jack Aldworth.

"I am quite amazed, my dear fellow," continued Wemmersley, turning amicably to Arthur, "to find that so much ill-will has been stirred up against you at Thoroton. I always feared you would find Gumption a slippery fellow; and, under present existing circumstances, if a general election should come on, —as it must, before long,—he would certainly throw you over."

"Throw me over?"

"I should rather say throw you *out*—throw you out for the borough of Thoroton."

"Even had he the inclination, I do not admit that he has the power."

"The *power*? Who can calculate on the ways and means of a jobbing attorney? In these revolutionary times, (for which we have to thank the madness of such people as your friends the Gretas and Co.,) no seat is safe.

Thoraton is at present one of the yea-nays —half-Whig, half-Tory—or, more properly speaking, half-Spalding, half-Armytage. But this species of influence is becoming a doubtful tenure; and if Gumption were to bring down some man of the people, or himself set up on the independent interest as a frank Radical,—there might be a curious turn of affairs."

"Mr. Gumption a Radical!" ejaculated Sophia.

"Yes! my dear Miss Armytage. When he was clerk to my friend the Duke of Spalding's agent—I admit that the man was a Tory;—turned out of his office, he attached himself a few months ago to Armytage and the Whigs;—and now that my friend Arthur has managed to affront him by not inviting his whole kith, kin, and acquaintance to the Holywell ball—take my word for it he will sulk into Radicalism, and there is no saying what man he may not bring down upon the neighbour-

hood!—A blacking-maker—a prize-fighter—Heaven knows what!"

Arthur, remembering that for Wemmersley's tenancy of Mill Hill the neighbourhood was wholly indebted to Gumption, secretly admitted that there was indeed no limit to the attorney's powers of mischief.

"If Mr. Gumption imagines," said he aloud, "that his services at my election (which have been largely remunerated) are to tie me down his slave for the remainder of my days, he is strangely mistaken. I owe my seat entirely to my family interest."

"But you forget that your family interest was about to bring in Reginald Maudsley," observed Wemmersley, lowering his voice, although he perceived that Mrs. Armytage was busy giving directions to a servant at the further end of the room. "If Gumption had not proposed you five minutes before——"

"Well, well!—do not let us fight our election battle over again!" cried Arthur, dreading

that his mother should overhear. "I took particular care that your protégé Gumption should have an especial invitation last night; and cannot see that he has cause for complaint."

"Not when he had sold you to the people at the Blue Boar, and your innovations on Thorotonian customs have broken his bargain? They will certainly come upon him for twenty of his thirty pieces of silver! Lomax was quite horrified this morning, when, as we were talking the business over with the Spaldings, a few of the sewers and *cloacæ* undermining that goodly edifice the British constitution, were first laid bare before his wondering eyes!"

"Lomax?—is *he* here still?" cried Arthur, wishing to change the conversation, as he saw his mother return towards her customary seat. "Why did you not bring him with you last night? I understood he was gone to the continent."

"Gone only to pass a month at Paris, and

already returned," said Wemmersley angrily. "I fancy he finds himself too comfortable at Mill Hill for us to get rid of him in a hurry." ("My wife's rich relation from Carolina" was evidently out of favour.) "And as to bringing him to the ball," continued Wemmersley, "he *was* here. Is it possible that you did not see him? intruding his odious toadyism on the Spaldings—and——"

"Your free and independent citizen, toady a Duchess?" said Sophia, laughing. "What a falling-off was there!"

"I never yet saw a Yankee, who would not fall down on his knees before a coronet!" cried Wemmersley, quite out of sorts. "They are the meanest worshippers of rank on earth. The thing has the charm of novelty to them; and a city knight is greater than Washington in their eyes!"

"Fie — fie — you are angry!" said Miss Armytage. "Do not compromise the independence of mind of a whole nation,

in retribution upon one Mr. Leonidas Lomax."

"I might have guessed at his secret sin," continued Wemmersley, "for I remember he was always telling me that his great grandmother was descended from an Irish earl and the founder of his family, brother to a bishop. But still, I never expected to see him dancing attendance after the Duchess."

"What a bore the Spaldings must find him!" said Marian, too tired to mingle much in the conversation.

"Indeed I don't know. He has written over to procure the Duchess a colony of beavers for her menagerie; and presented Lady Amabel with a set of Indian mocassins and bark canoes, which he had refused a hundred times to my little girl."

"How very amusing! Perhaps he has fallen in love with her!" said Marian. "I must question Lady Amabel about this outlandish adorer."

"If you had not been too much engrossed last night by the attentions of so many admiring friends," observed Wemmersley spitefully, "you would have had sufficient proof to the contrary."

"Indeed! Perhaps, then, the attraction lies with Lady Honoria? She is certainly the prettier of the two."

"Neither of them is so pretty as the real object of the absurd old coxcomb's attentions."

"Lady Laura Greta, perhaps?" said Arthur, much diverted by the petulance of the disappointed Wemmersley.

"No!—Lomax's tender heart was touched in the spring-time, among rose-bushes and nightingales, when Gretas and Spaldings, and members of parliament were amusing themselves together in London."

"I do believe it is Sophia!" cried Arthur; "My dear sister, I wish you joy!"

"The thing is hardly worth so much guessing," said Wemmersley. "I believe my kins-

man's feelings were moved in the first instance by the first sight of a feudal moat, and the historical associations of a battlemented walk. These things are wanting in America——"

"Di Maranham, as I live!" exclaimed Arthur, laughingly; "a very suitable match."

"Wrong again. Lomax likes old architecture—but not old women."

"Then it must be Rosamond Devonport!" said Miss Armytage. "How pretty she was looking last night!"

"Yes!—I heard Lomax protesting to the Duchess that she was the sweetest *gurl* in the room."

"I do believe," said Marian, struck by a sudden reminiscence, "that it was Mr. Lomax who was dangling after Rosamond, dressed like a bad imitation of Lord Wyndham!—I did not in the least recognize him."

"How should you?—He has returned from Paris, completely metamorphosed; fine trinkets,—fine waistcoats,—pinched, padded, painted

for aught I know; with an Adonis ring, and a pair of fixed spurs. Just the way with people from half-civilized countries! Regarding all these things as curious works of art, they load themselves with them, as they would buy a picture or a cameo. A Yankee belle, with the finest head of hair, spends half her income in false curls; and such is the case with Lomax; —the savage is beginning to break out in him."

"And is my little friend Rose proud of her conquest?" inquired Sophia.

"Amused perhaps!—But the three old women are too cunning to laugh at such a chance for their ward; Lomax has a clear twelve thousand a year, as my wife was foolish enough to proclaim to every one in the neighbourhood, when he first arrived at Mill Hill."

"Very indiscreet!" observed Arthur, "considering how many spinsters we have in the neighbourhood. Lady Laura Greta,—Miss Armytage——"

"Pray do not include your sister's name in any such absurd enumeration!" interrupted Mrs. Armytage, breaking forth from her long silence. "Mr. Lomax has very wisely confined his pretensions to his own level. Miss Devonport and himself are both Creoles, and will make a very appropriate match."

"Appropriate?—oh, my dear mother!—Think of pretty little Rose, with her graceful manners and interesting position!"

"I see nothing interesting in her position. In my opinion, people should never be introduced into society upon ambiguous grounds. *Who* is Miss Devonport?—No one knows!—And some respectable Yorkshire family might have been disgraced by their son being taken in, by the attraction of a pretty face, to marry a nobody."

Wemmersley looked with an ironical smile towards Arthur, to ascertain whether he felt this "unkindest cut of all;" but Arthur, with

an unblushing brow, was gazing affectionately upon Marian.

"And has Mr. Lomax actually made his proposals?" inquired Mrs. Arthur Armytage, not hearing or not heeding the taunt.

"You will have an opportunity of making the inquiry yourself to-morrow, at Spalding Court," said Wemmersley. "Lord Wyndham, either to annoy me, or meaning to make a butt of *him*, has actually invited him to join your party."

"Delightful!—A butt is always such an acquisition!"

"But *you* are not going to Spalding Court till the 10th?" observed Mrs. Armytage, compassionating the bad taste of the remark.

"Oh! yes,—we are going to-morrow."

"You are mistaken; the invitation was for the 10th."

"But we have altered our arrangements," interposed Arthur. "Greta and his friends

are to dine there on the 9th; and the Duchess made Marian promise last night to anticipate our visit."

"Quite impossible!" said Mrs. Armytage coolly. "I have a dinner party at Holywell on the 9th."

"You never mentioned it to me; or I should not have engaged myself to the Duchess," replied her son.

"You have only to write and put off the engagement."

"I wish it were in my power. Greta, Dumbarton and Edward Brereton are invited expressly to meet us, and were present when we accepted the Duchess's proposals."

"Lord Greta and Lord Edward Brereton are doubtless personages of very vast importance," said the Lady of Holywell. "My guests are simply your old friend Dr. Grant,—who showed you the attention of returning from the lakes a week before his time, in order to be present at the ball last night,"—(Arthur

did not think it necessary to acquaint his mother that the good Doctor's precipitate return had been produced by his hope of being in time to persuade her to adjourn her entertainment to the Blue Boar;) "and my own earliest acquaintances—the Maranham family——"

"*Do* write to the Duchess and defer our visit till the 10th," whispered Marian to her husband.

"Besides your father's friends, from Greta Castle," added Mrs. Armytage: and Marian hardened her heart, and said no more.

"I am extremely sorry the misunderstanding should have occurred," said Arthur resolutely; "and will fully explain it to our friends. But not having been apprized of your plans, I had no reason to suspect any engagement at home. It is impossible for people to act in concert where a mutual understanding does not subsist."

"I scarcely considered it necessary to hold a family council previously to inviting my

friends to dine with me," said Mrs. Armytage, stoutly.

"Nor I to request permission, ere I engaged myself to pass a week with the Duke of Spalding," retorted Arthur.

Sophia trembled, and Wemmersley was enchanted. He never before witnessed anything so nearly resembling a dispute between the mother and son.

"I fear it would be impossible for us to get off," interposed Marian. "The Duchess has so completely set her heart on having us of the party."

"The Duchess!" reiterated Mrs. Armytage, with a tone of sovereign contempt. "The Duchess,—to whom, from both of you, so vast a debt of respect and gratitude is owing!"

The word "gratitude" stung Arthur to the quick. He felt that, with all his faults, he had not shown himself ungrateful. His heart swelled within him.

"Wemmersley! will you give me your opi-

nion of my new setter?" said he, rising, on any pretext, to quit the room.

And while the excited visitor hurried through his "good mornings" and good byes," Arthur Armytage made his way across the hall towards the stables,—he knew not whither;—cursing between his teeth the miserable subjection in which he lived,—the still more painful punctilio by which he was bound to its endurance.

CHAPTER X.

Such the gay splendour, the luxurious state
Of Caliphs old, who, on the Tigris' shore,
In mighty Bagdat, populous and great,
Held their bright court where was of ladies store,
And verse, love, music, still the garland wore.
When sleep was coy, the bard in waiting there
Cheer'd the deep midnight with the muses' lore;
Composing music bade his dreams be fair,
And music lent new gladness to the morning air.

THOMSON.

THE family seat of the Duke of Spalding was one of those majestic country mansions in which England so excusably prides herself, as rivalling in magnificence the palaces of other kingdoms, and far surpassing them in distribution, completeness, order, elegance, and refinement. Situated in that most picturesque district of Yorkshire which terminates in the Caves of Craven, and the Seams of Malham

and Goodale, the park of Spalding Court was bounded to the north by a massive ridge of rocks, and opened westward towards a beautiful mere and extensive range of woodlands; nor had even the experimental vagaries of the Duchess divested it of those noble specimens of ancient timber which serve as our national attestation that, for the last eight hundred years, the bosom of our country has remained unscarred by the hoofs of an invading army.

The mansion was princely; a quadrangle, dating from the august reign of Elizabeth, and having borrowed improvements, without being disfigured by innovations, from the progress of succeeding ages. The household, too, was of corresponding dignity, and excellently trained; a circumstance the more remarkable, considering the restless pains taken by the Duchess in its management. No one, in fact, ever passed a week at Spalding Court, without admitting it to be one of the pleasantest and best-regulated houses in the kingdom.

The Duchess was so far superior in worldly wisdom to Mrs. Armytage, that she *did* admit the influence of her children in her domestic arrangements. Aware that even the most fashionable people must grow *old*-fashioned, unless they condescend to march with the times, she was glad to re-juvenize with her sons and daughters, and learn from them the details of those artificial wants and necessities which the march of frivolity creates, from year to year, for the impoverishment of the rich and the enrichment of the poor. While the Duke kept on the passive and noiseless tenour of his way, having "forgot himself," if not "to stone," certainly to stucco,—the Marquis of Downham and Lord Leicester were admitted to legislate the affairs of the table;—Lord Wyndham, when in England, had a vote in the stable and carriage department; while the two girls took upon themselves a share in the cabinet-council of the drawing-room—the invitations, the fêtes, the order and disorder of the

day. Not that the Duchess ever ceased to act upon her axiom, *l'état c'est moi*; but, like other potentates, she *took* the opinion of her cabinet-council, and, when it suited her, kept her own. She did not, for instance, give ear to the animadversions of her family on her friends, tools, or dependents, nor allow them to interfere with her antipathies. Neither sons nor daughters could have inspired her with charitable feelings towards Mrs. Armytage, nor contemptuous ones towards those easy-as-a-glove obsequients,—the much-enduring Wemmersleys of Mill Hill.

Such was the house and such the people towards whom Arthur and his wife made their way on the fatal 8th of August, through a lovely country and lovely weather; secretly rejoicing at their release from the fretful formalities of Holywell, cheered by the consciousness of being again together, unwatched by discontented eyes, and welcomed into pleasant society for the sake of their own powers of

pleasing. Marian found, on her arrival, her rooms so considerately chosen, that she could not for a moment apprehend that her child would be troublesome or in the way:—they were magnificently lodged, but established with their own servants about them. In a moment she felt at home. Shy as she was, there was something in the independent habits of Spalding Court calculated to put her instantly at ease.

She was already acquainted with the family, with the exception of the Duke (who was seen only at meals, and then seen only as a handsome, high-bred, reserved man; the picture of a picture of "a Man of Quality," by Kneller or Reynolds) and of his eldest son, the Marquis of Downham. But the character of the son, as one of the types of the times, merits closer investigation than that of the father.

Singularly gifted by nature with those extrinsic attractions which, though they some-

times tend to the promotion of the obscure, almost invariably serve to depreciate the great. Lord Downham had from babyhood been cited for the mere distinction of his beauty; had been modelled, painted, exhibited, engraved—quizzed for his prettiness as a schoolboy, and adored as an adolescent. He had made artists rich, tailors fashionable, and ladies mad, bad, and indifferent; too handsome to study, too handsome to seek popularity, too handsome to marry a wife. But there comes a trying hour in the career of every Adonis; an hour which washballs, pommades, and Gowland's lotion may retard, but cannot annihilate; an hour when the chestnut or raven curls wax thin or grizzly—when the cheek grows lank, the eye dim, and crows'-feet and wrinkles usurp the world-worn face. Of this, his Lordship felt himself on the verge. Late hours and claret had accelerated the ravages of time; and now, the Marquis was vibrating in a state of exqui-

site uncertainty. A beauty no longer,—how was he next to distinguish himself from the vulgar herd of Lords and Commons?

In these times, the modes are numberless of courting notoriety. He might compose an opera, and inflict his own symphonies on the endurance of the Ancient Concerts. He might ascend the heights of Mont Blanc, or Topocatepetl, at the cost of a guide or so, and annuities to the widows. He might daub landscapes for Somerset-House,—cut up society into shreds in weekly caricatures; — might elope with a Bishop's widow,—or an Infanta of Portugal. But in all this, the Marquis felt that he should be at best but an ignoble imitator of noble originals. He knew that in political life it was vain for him to seek distinction;—his party was overflowing with able and ambitious men. What if he were to turn Radical, and attempt to revolutionize the country? No!—independently of the personal sacrifices indispensable to such a recantation,

even that plan wanted originality. Others had still been beforehand with him. At best he could only hope to figure as Mirabeau III.

His choice was still undetermined; and this, for the first time in his days, rendered the superannuated Cupid a very amusing companion. Every new celebrity—(and in London how rapidly do the demigods of fame succeed each other on the altar of publicity!)—tempted him for a moment. The North Pole came into fashion;—and he thought of fitting out a trebly-cased yacht for a campaign against the walrusses. Timbuctoo and the lost tribes of Israel excited the speculations of the ignorant-erudite; and the Marquis pondered upon the eligibility of assuming a Mesopotamian costume, and pilgrimizing through the deserts. The cold scheme lasted him one hot summer; the torrid project kept him warm during the next hard winter. But although thinking of the frosty Caucasus enabled him to endure the fervours of Brighton in the

dog-days, it did not beguile him into so much as crossing the Marine Parade towards the completion of the adventure. The Mazurka soon came into fashion; and the success of its exotic professors inspired him with the notion of becoming the dancing idol of the day. Then followed the theatricals at Bridgewater-House; and nothing less would satisfy him than to out-Kean poor Kean! But why enumerate the catalogue of his erratic schemes? He was, as it has been already observed, still undecided;—not *une ambition manquée*, but *une ambition ambigue*.

The girls, Marian had, on a slight acquaintance, already pronounced to be charming, lively, natural, enthusiastic creatures; without suspecting that Lady Amabel's *naïveté* was the most studied of all her accomplishments; Lady Honoria's enthusiasm a clever cold-blooded speculation. By assuming at fitting moments the ecstacies of some *engouement de bon ton*, such as for Pasta's singing, or Cha-

lon's portraits—or even for "the fine mind of that intellectual creature Lady So-and-so,"—or "the superhuman eloquence of dear Lord Thunderam's last speech,"—a girl of very ordinary faculties contrived to pass for a critic and a judge. It all did very well in their own set. Lady Amabel was established as a sayer of odd things, and Lady Honoria of clever ones. Even wiser people were sometimes taken in;—artists seduced by the medium of their vanity into believing their talents *really* appreciated; or very young philosophers, who saw in the bright eyes and coral lips of the pretty Spaldings the guarantee of any excellence they might be pleased to assume,—applauded to the echo.

"I am so enchanted you are come!" said Lady Amabel, dragging rather than leading Marian to a seat in the boudoir, after having dispatched Arthur to the archery-ground, in search of her brothers,—"I remained at home in case you should arrive early;" (adding nothing of

her expectations of the arrival of the Greta Castle party.) "Mamma and the rest are gone to a sort of pic-nic at Malham Cove; to gather wild auriculas, rave about the beauties of Wordsworth, and eat fried perch from Malham Water. We have got a charming little coterie; Chronos, the poet;—Lady Emily Maclaren, the famous politician, you know, (a great ally, by the way, of mamma's,) who was a sort of ex-whipper-in to our party when we were in office,—and her husband, I conclude, though I have neither seen nor heard him since they arrived,—nobody plays dumbness to such perfection. Then there is the Duke of Wetherby, whom mamma has been trying to catch for Honoria, these three years. Of him I shall say nothing lest he should ever become my brother-in-law; and for the same reason I leave out papa's sister Lady Marscourt, and our demure little cousin Pen,—who has been out these nine years and still holds to a muslin frock, coral necklace, and potations, pottle-deep, of milk

and water. Besides these, we expect to-morrow a most amusing savage whom we lately caught in your neighbourhood——"

"Mr. Leonidas Lomax?"

"Exactly; who, I believe, was squatting in a wigwam in a cub's skin, or *blanket*, some half-dozen years ago, and now pretends to civilization, and swears that his broad-cloth does not sit uneasily on his shoulders. Poor Downham will be so disappointed!—We have prepared him to expect one of the "half-horse, half-alligator, with a touch of the earthquake" species;—and he has primed himself with all sorts of Yankeeisms to meet the monster; when, lo!—the wretch, instead of sitting with his legs on the table, and doing all the amusing things described by Mrs. Trollope, will talk of nothing but balls at the Tuileries,—dinners at the Café de Paris;—and "miladys" us all round, like a country footman."

Marian felt a little frightened. Amid this waste of satire, she thought it little likely her

own faults and failings could escape; but Lady Amabel, with whom the art of living in the world almost supplied the place of discernment, discovered, perhaps, that she had gone too far.

"But there is nothing new," she continued, "in discovering curiosities of this description in our country neighbourhood. *Il n'en manque jamais en province,* as my brother Wyndham says. The wonder, to *us*, is to find a dear little country neighbour, like yourself, in whom we can hope to make a friend. If it had not been for Wyn, we should never have become acquainted with you; for Holywell is such a formal affair, that the idea of a mere morning visit there gives mamma a fit of the ague. Miss Armytage appears to be a good kind of well-meaning girl; but she is so delicate in health, and so kept down by her mother, that there is no knowing what to say or do with her. I often wonder that the trees date grow

at Holywell, for fear they should grow the wrong way for pleasing Mrs. Armytage."

Marian, with all her want of tact, was wise enough to forbear adding a word in discommendation of her husband's mother; but it really *did* give her pleasure to hear any one presuming to utter such truths respecting her imperial majesty. She contented herself with observing, in extenuation—"If you would give yourself the trouble to talk to Sophia, I am persuaded you would like her."

"No!—she is the bosom friend of Lady Laura Greta, *our* moral antipathy. Some one advised mamma to make up a match with her for my brother Leicester, and so secure Lord Rotherham's influence for his election; but Leicester declared he would as soon marry the Speaker in petticoats! Don't you think her odious?"

"More so than any one I ever saw!" said Marian, with perfect sincerity.

"There's a dear little creature!" cried Lady Amabel, seizing her hand. "I knew you would be such an acquisition to us—I knew we should find you so different from all those formal Armytages! Hark!—Do you hear that flute? I forgot to enumerate, among our list of people, Monsieur de Cléramel. Do you happen to know Monsieur de Cléramel, or rather Monsieur de Cléramel's flute?—No?—You are very lucky! He is the finest performer in Europe, and the greatest *fat*—beats Tulou and Alfred D.,—and for the last two years has been asked everywhere as a lion! But on a sudden the man grew fine—*would* play and would *not* play—in short, made himself a bore. So now he has been invited to half-a-dozen country-houses, W— Abbey, B— Castle, and several more; and we have entered into a conspiracy to drop all mention of the flute. The poor soul, who is dying to show off, would give his right hand to be asked to play; but we are inexorable:—so poor Cléramel is obliged to

stay at home whenever a party of pleasure is going on, that he may keep himself in practice without being overheard. Ah!—He has stopped!—Depend on it the carriages are in sight."

And, as she predicted, within a few minutes the whole party entered the adjoining library; and Mrs. Armytage was warmly welcomed and kindly presented to Lady Marscourt and Lady Emily. Chronos, with a pretty little ready-made, bright and shining enamelled compliment in his mouth, solicited the same honour; the Duke bowed lower than he was apt to do to those not belonging to his immediate set; and Marian was soon surrounded with acquaintances, and almost at her ease.

CHAPTER XI.

Come on, then, Satire, general, unconfined,
Spread thy broad wing, and souse on all the kind.
I fain would please you, if I knew with what—
Tell me which name is lawful game, which not.
Must great offenders, once escaped the crown,
Like royal harts, be never more run down?
Admit your law to spare the knight requires,
As beasts of nature may we hunt the squires?

POPE.

"How wrong I am even to set foot in Spalding Court," cried Lord Greta to his friend Armytage, usurping a place in the arm-chair of Arthur's dressing-room when they all retired for the night:—"the sight of these hollow, frivolous people puts me on such wickedly good terms with myself for a whole month afterwards."

"After all, they are entertaining enough," replied Arthur, who had been passing an un-

usually agreeable evening. "Pleasant, but wrong."

"Yes!—And so are dancing-dogs, if one had patience and leisure to admire their antics."

"*I*, unfortunately, have leisure for anything," said Arthur.

"A double reason for making me regret to see you in the way of being attracted by these foolish people. I have been puzzling myself, for three days past, to find out the Duchess's motive for inviting you here. Don't be affronted—I mean no offence to your dignity. I know that *I* am asked on the remote chance of my falling in love with one of the daughters, just as they were civil to my mother a few months ago, by way of making up to Laura for that vivacious member of the community, Lord Leicester. But *you* are married."

"And if single, not very likely to attract the manœuvres of a match-maker," said Arthur despondingly.

"What, then, can they want of you?" continued Lord Greta. "The pleasure of your society?—By no means! The Duchess would infinitely prefer, and can at all times command, any one of the fifty dining-out men about town, who travel, during the sporting season, from house to house, with their little note-books of impromptu clevernesses in their portmanteaux. I wish I could make it out! I shall hardly like to leave you in Yorkshire, Arthur, while I am on the Moors, exposed to all the fascination of these glistening reptiles!"

"Fie, fie!—You use hard words."

"Applied to hard natures! I look upon such a woman as the Duchess as a public pest! A better-meaning person than the Duke of Spalding does not exist—full of integrity and honest feeling; and such a man has been lost to himself and the country, from being wrecked in marriage against an iceberg broke loose—a woman without principle or feeling. Any man inclined to commit matrimony on a short

acquaintance, ought to look upon the Duke of Spalding, and take warning!"

"But, my dear fellow, *I* am in no danger on that score. You need not be afraid of her Grace engaging *me* to one of her daughters!"

"No—but I may suspect her of an intention of engaging you to one of her party. You are known to be a young member—a lukewarm politician. You are accused, and (pardon me) with some cause, of trifling away your life as chance impels you. Otherwise, that Machiavel in petticoats, Lady Emily Maclaren, would not have ventured to make so bold a cast for you as she made to-night. Had she intended to entangle a more experienced adversary, she would have commenced her operations craftily—remotely—secretly; but her rashness will be your redemption. Even *you*, who are too idle to open both your eyes to aid you in walking through the world, cannot but perceive, with one, that her Ladyship's object is your voice and vote."

"Indeed, I perceive no such thing," said Arthur, laughing, but nettled. "*You* budding statesmen, my dear Greta, whose first beard sprouted white, and whose precocious wisdom is to enable England to weather the storm, fancy, like the little mole in the fable, that you hear the sound of ten thousand water-mills, where mill-stream there is none. I make no boast of my political wisdom; yet, upon my life, I suspect I have that which is better to be depended upon. Mine are family politics, which I can no more change than my family name. Yours, on the contrary, are open to the influence of argument. *Your* views might be changed by the smiles or the eloquence of a Lady Emily Maclaren—I should simply reply to them,—

> My name is Armytage!
> On Yorkshire wolds my mother feeds her flock,
> Whose constant care is to increase her votes,
> And keep her only son, myself, a Whig!"

"If you have nothing more convincing to urge in your own defence, better join our

party to the Moors, and keep yourself out of the way of mischief."

"Join your party?—I wish I could!—But I have married a wife, you know; and therefore I——"

"Nonsense!—Do you suppose that when I marry, I shall give up grouse-shooting?"

"No!—Because *you* will have the means of leaving your wife in a happy home of her own, while I must abandon mine to the caprices of a person far from favourably disposed towards her."

"Perhaps you are right," said Greta, remembering on how many occasions he had been pained by the deportment of Mrs. Armytage, even towards her own faultless daughter: "yet I am not the more reconciled to leaving you in the midst of a set of *intriguantes*."

"No great mischief can be done in a week; and even Lady Emily's audacity would scarcely pursue the attack amidst the sober formalities of Holywell."

"*Ne gagez pas!*"

"At all events, I shall be too busy to be vulnerable."

"Busy with what?—Pheasant-shooting?"

"No!—I have more rational occupation in view; to which, as you appear to be in Thersites' vein, I will not now call your attention."

"Do, pray!—I am quite serious now," said Lord Greta, earnestly.

"Well, then, I am beginning to be as tired of my good-for-nothingness as *you* can be of seeing me good for nothing—I want an object in life, or strength of mind to exist without one. I feel that I ought to improve myself—that, some day or other, more will be required of me than I am capable of rendering. *You* were studying at Eton, at Oxford, when I was driving tandems; and as I did not choose to be a schoolboy in my days of schoolboyism, I must become one now, when I ought to be fulfilling the duties of a man.—It is not too late. My excellent friend Grant (who will not laugh

at me, as you are probably dying to do) has often urged me to this, and will help me, without making a boast or a bore of his assistance."

"Laugh at you?" said Lord Greta feelingly. "Laugh at *me*, if you like, for having been afraid of a coquette such as Lady Emily, while your plans were so differently directed. You have set my mind at ease. And now, good night; or your wife, with all her good-nature, will tear her papillotes for spite at being kept awake by my grumbling."

The following day shone brilliantly upon Spalding Court. The diversion originally offered as a temptation to Lord Greta and his friends, of a trolling party on the lake, although somewhat deteriorated to the sportsmen by the brilliancy of the weather, derived new attractions when, in the course of the afternoon, the skiff reserved for the use of the ladies was seen scudding towards the point of the shore along which the gallant anglers were

dispersed,—"youth at the prow" and Lord Wyndham Spalding "at the helm."

One or two, among whom were Arthur and his friend, tired of indifferent sport, begged to be admitted to the sailing party; and after sufficient enjoyment of a refreshing breeze adding new attractions to the beautiful and even majestic scenery around, they anchored on a well-wooded islet, where the Duchess, in a fit of Walter-Scottish enthusiasm, had, some years before, erected a "bower" on the model of the exiled Douglas's retreat at Loch Katrine.

"It was a lodge of ample size,
But strange of structure and device;
Of such materials as around
The workman's hand had readiest found.
Lopp'd of their boughs, their hoar trunks bared,
And by the hatchet rudely squared,
To give the walls their destined height,
The sturdy oak and ash unite;
While moss and clay and leaves combined
To fence each crevice from the wind.
The lighter pine-trees, overhead,
Their slender length for rafters spread,

And wither'd heath and rushes dry
Supplied a russet canopy.
Due westward, fronting to the green,
A rural portico was seen,
Aloft on native pillars borne
Of mountain fir with bark unshorn."

Neither Lady of the Lake, nor stalwart Baron, however, was visible on the present occasion; but, in their stead, a *maître d'hôtel* and two prosaic commonplace standard-footmen, presiding over a collation which, by her Grace's orders, had been considerately transported to the spot; and in lieu of the clang of falling armour, the clattering of knives and forks, and detonating corks of Ay and Sillery, were shortly heard upon the spot. Lady Marscourt, always alive to occasions for bringing forward the modest merits of simplicity in a muslin frock, had devised in her turn a surprise for the party, purporting to be agreeable, by stationing her dear Penelope in the portico to delight them with the appropriate strain of "Huntsman, rest!"—and

"While to her lips, in measured frame,
The minstrel verse spontaneous came,"

the French horns, which at a distance had accompanied the party, stationed among the high-waving fern and golden broom,

——"unseen,
Fill'd up the symphonies between."

To Marian, all this had the charm of enchantment. *Her* delicate senses had not been from infancy satiated, like those of most of her present companions, by sights and sounds of beauty. The limited and city-bounded sphere of her enjoyments had left her feelings free for every glorious impression derivable from contemplation of the beauties of Nature; and in a scene so lovely, with a cheerful party of conciliatory friends, including Arthur among the number, she began to feel herself in a new and happier world. Lady Emily Maclaren insisted on hearing from Winsome Wyn one of those lively French *Chansons de Société*, for giving point to the

finesses of which, the gay Parisian was so celebrated; and as Monsieur de Cléramel was, as usual, at home *tête-à-tête* with his flute, (styled by the Spaldings his "*Flauto Tragico,*") no one's vanity was wounded; and the little *fête* went off as buoyantly as if

"Love and all the world were young."

More sailing, a last visit to Lord Edward, and his brothers of the angle, passed away the time till the cool of the evening; when the gong was heard on the lawn, warning the stragglers of the party home to prepare for dinner; — and at dinner new guests, with the arrival of Lord Leicester from town, served to vary the scene of the preceding day.

"And who did you leave in London?" inquired Lady Emily of the dandy passive, whose grave countenance was bent over his soup plate as steadily as that of Narcissus over his stream.

"Nobody!" was the taciturn reply.

"And what was Nobody doing to amuse itself?" she persisted.

"Nothing!"

"Going, of course, *no where*, eh?—my dear fellow!" inquired Lord Edward Brereton, who was too light-hearted to be paralysed, even by the inanity of an Ineffable.

"Where *should* people go in August, unless to the Moors?" said young Dumbarton, as earnestly as if really seeking information.

"When I quitted town," observed Lord Greta, "there appeared to be a very pleasant society remaining; and as to *going*, I never saw a more locomotive set! Every day some party to Richmond, Norwood, Kew Wood."

"Yes! I remember hearing several of our club allude to persecutions of that kind they had escaped. The Dowager Duchess, for instance, had a serious exploring *partie de campagne* to the cemetery at Kensal Green," said Lord Leicester.

"One of the most beautiful spots in the environs of London," said Lord Greta, unsilenced by his impertinence.

"And I was assured that Lady Baynard and her noisy daughters deluded several unguarded individuals into a tadpole dinner at Blackwall."

"I was there," resumed his lordship. "A remarkably pleasant set;—and an admirable fish-dinner, arranged by the web-footed *chef* of the Dutch ambassador."

"Ah!—indeed!—*That* must have been worth tasting? *Du cabillot,* of course not *au bleu,* (as at the *Rocher*) but *à l'Orange;* and oceans of water *Zuije,* enough to cover the Doggerbank—eh? Greta!—Could you not give our people a hint for rendering palatable some of those splendid *brochets* which you were so fortunate as to land this morning?" cried Lord Wyndham.

"I am as bad a cook as fisherman," replied

Lord Greta;—"and a worse critic than either. I only know that I found the Baynard's party the pleasantest of the season."

"I fancy you Foreign Officials, as well as we Life-Guardsmen, grow accustomed to swallowing the dregs of the season," said Lord Edward, laughing. "I swear I saw, just before I left town, some of our fellows flirting into the same window of the same carriage, crawling along the same line of the same ring, with the same horses at the same pace, that I had watched them at the same hour at the same fun, every day from the close of the hunting season;—and, I suspect, saying precisely the same sweet things,—for they were received with precisely the same sweet smile as for five months past!"

"What is there but sameness in your London routine!" cried Lord Wyndham. "*C'est d'une monotonie à faire gêler le Vésuve!* Now, at Paris, we have, for all seasons and their change, (ay!—even for all *demi-saisons,*) a variation of *promenades.*"

"Reason good!" answered Lady Emily. "*You*, who never stir two leagues from the capital,—who take the waters of Enghien by way of Spa,—find your Swiss valleys at Montmorency,—hunt and shoot in the forests of Vincennes, Versailles, or St. Germain's,—and make even your Newmarket in the Champs de Mars, and your steeple chaces along the avenues of the Bois de Boulogne,—you are forced to find mountains in mole-hills, and search for the picturesque in the *banlieue*."

"Respect our motives for remaining stationary, my dear Lady Emily,—respect our motives," replied Wyndham, a little piqued, and well aware of the factitious nature of a considerable portion of the little beauty's charms. "*We* fix ourselves at Paris, because the lovely creatures who render its coteries so attractive, *cannot* travel. The better half of a *Parisienne* lives in her *cartons*, and in *cartons* too numerous for even the most accommodating of Hobson's travelling carriages. The

gown, the cap, the *béret*, the hat, the turban, might perhaps be transported; and all the glories of Mesdames Oudot and Beaudrant render some obscure château a Paradise of coquettes. But still the dear creature dares not quit her coëffeur, her dentist,—the *artistes* who, *par abonnement*, preside over the paring of her nails and the extraction of every gray hair. The rumpling of a dress, the discomposure of a feather in her *tambour*, distracts her; so that, in order to keep her temper and her lover, she wisely plants herself in her delicious hotel *entre cour et jardin*, for at least ten months of the twelve;—and we, of necessity, remain at her feet."

"It appeared to me," added Arthur Armytage, not understanding his friend's malicious motives for misrepresentation, "that Paris was quite as much deserted at the close of the summer, as London:—the heat, the glare and fine dust of the unwatered roads of its plaster soil, rendering it far more insupportable. I

admit that the country life of the Parisians is merely the villa life of our *beau-monde;* and *their* villa life is *pour tout potage.* They content themselves with remaining within a drive of the Opera; and care not to go farther, at the risk of faring worse."

"Why, who *could* fix his residence in that most desolate and solitary of barns, a comfortless French château!" cried Lord Greta. "The habits of the nation are distinctly averse from country domestication; and, for the last century, it has been the policy of its rulers to concentrate the twin aristocracy of birth and wealth in the metropolis; just as it is the wisdom of ours, to promote their dissemination over the face of the kingdom. The peers of France, and even its lower Chamber, know little more of the country they govern than can be learned from a post-map; while our English legislature, whether hereditary or elective, find their own interest in watching over and promoting the improvements of even

the remotest county,—the most obscure parish;—the mass is held together by the closest and most intermingled series of personal ties."

The Duke of Wetherby, and the automaton generally understood to be Mr. Maclaren, assumed a polite look of conviction, and bowed assent. The Duke of Spalding secretly wondered that a discreet young man should throw away so much wisdom at such a table as *his*. The Duchess whispered something audibly to Lady Marscourt about "first-rate talent—most rising young man of the day,"—and Lady Amabel made mouths across the table at Lord Edward Brereton. Not one of them thought or cared for Monsieur de Cléramel's feelings. But their egotism was of small importance. Little Simplicity in a muslin frock, in order to secure them from mortification, had been engrossing the flute-player in unintermitting argumentation on the immorality of Ancelot's dramas and the novels of Monsieur de Balzac!

"When do you return to this beloved Paris? and will you undertake a commission for me?" inquired Lady Emily, in a peacemaking tone, of Lord Wyndham.

"The first *coup d'archet* of the *Italiens* is always my signal for setting up my tent in the Rue de Provence," he replied. "I shall quit Yorkshire immediately after Doncaster. Till then, I am here, and at your commands."

"Better come with us to the Moors," cried Lord Edward, who, for noise and movement sake, would willingly have included the whole Travellers' Club in his party. "Now Leicester is arrived, you are no longer wanted at home."

"Lord Leicester is so great an acquisition!" ejaculated Lady Emily. But the dandy passive heeded her not. He was mincing a chili into his lobster salad.

"I understand our Castle of Glenvarloch is as vast and rambling as a Languedoc *château*," said Lord Greta. "We have room

even for your Italian valet, my dear Wyndham, who is by far the greatest man of my acquaintance."

"Tempt not a falling man too far!" exclaimed his Lordship aloud; adding, in a low voice, "Swear you can't do without me—swear it—and loud enough to wake his Grace, asleep yonder at the head of the table."

"At all events, manage it for the first fortnight," said Lord Greta, following his injunctions; "and Armytage, who has already half a mind to play truant, will bear you company and return with you, by the time the sport flags and birds grow scarce. What say you, Arthur?—or rather," addressing Marian, "what say *you?*"

"That I think it an excellent scheme," answered she, blushing at the sound of her own voice, but approving any plan tending to remove her husband from Greta Castle.

"Spoken like a wise wife!" muttered the Duke of Spalding in an inaudible voice, and

not half so much asleep as (to save himself trouble) he chose to appear.

"And *I*," cried the Duchess, "give it my full sanction" (which no one had asked), "on condition that Mr. Armytage leaves us his wife in pledge, as a hostage for Wyndham's return at the appointed time. Indeed, my dear Mrs. Armytage, you *must* delight us with your company during his absence. We cannot think of parting with you so soon; for it seems these wild-geese take wing for the North to-morrow night. Say yes, and make my girls perfectly happy?"

Marian was too much embarrassed to say anything, when she saw the eyes of the whole party fixed upon her. But every one answered in her name, that "Oh! yes—she certainly would, could, should, and must remain at Spalding Court till the return of Mr. Armytage." And Marian was too much in the habit of being answered for by others, to venture denial. Even if at that moment she had

recollected Mrs. Armytage and Holywell, she would not have presumed to raise objections.

"By the way, what has become of Chronos? How could we be so forgetful as to sit down to dinner without Mr. Chronos!" cried the Duchess, addressing her daughters. "I suppose no additional cover was laid for Leicester; and as I did not see a vacant chair, I missed no one."

"We must have left him on the island," said Lady Amabel.

"I saw him sitting on the stump of a tree, contemplating the beauties of the setting sun," added Lady Honoria. "He looked quite a picture, like some dear delightful old minstrel—Gray's Bard, or Homer, without their beards."

"He will be eaten alive by the water-rats!" said Lord Leicester, calmly. "When the boatman used to reside on the island, he lost a child a year."

"Absurd!" said the Duchess, angrily.—

"Lamarre!"—(addressing the groom of the chambers) "*Sait-on ce qui est devenu Monsieur Chronos?*"

"*Monsieur s'est fait servir un poulet au blanc, dans son appartement, Madame la Duchesse,*" replied the spruce valet-de-chambre. "*Il m'a fait prévenir qu'il ne descend plus aujourd'hui.*"

"Then he is composing!" cried Lady Emily. "That is his way. When the Pythonic fit is upon him, he shuts himself up, door within door, padlock upon padlock, lest any one should witness his contortions; takes green tea and æther, and has his room fumigated with Godfrey's salts."

"For fear of infection?"

"To support exhausted nature. To-morrow at breakfast, my dear Duchess, your album will have to boast 'seven stanzas written by a bore,' on your island and its fair islanders."

"Oh! how very delightful!" cried Lady Honoria. "The Spalding album wanted only that to be perfect! We have got something

from every modern poet worth having. Lord Albert, Lord Francis, Lord C., Lord D., Lord E., Sir William S.,—all the galaxy of the Keepsake. The smallest possible stanza from Mr. Chronos will be a perfect gem! Penelope! you and your serenade will be immortalized!"

"I am sure I sincerely hope not!" said Lady Marscourt, gravely. "It would distress the poor girl to death to be immortalized—probably to be added to some future edition of Mr. Chronos's works, and be stuck up in every library window."

"You would not like to be stuck up, should you, Pen?" inquired Lady Amabel of her cousin;—but the young lady in the coral necklace was not quite young enough to answer such a question.

"I think it very impertinent in people to put persons into their books!" said Lady Marscourt crabbedly.

"*Persons* ought certainly to monopolize the

right of satirizing *people*," said Lord Greta; "and with an especial reserve for privilege of peerage."

"But our friend Chronos is more than a person,—quite a personage;" observed Lady Emily.

Already the Duchess, seeing her sister-in-law's colour and choler rising, had given the signal for quitting the dining-room;—and the gentlemen were now left to digest their Highland plans, without the dread of wives or mothers before their eyes.

CHAPTER XIII.

Every company is differently circumstanced and has its peculiar cant and jargon; which may give occasion to wit and mirth within that circle, but would seem flat and insipid in any other.

CHESTERFIELD.

MARIAN's coincidence was very easily confirmed, when she was informed by her husband that Lord Greta and his friends having decided to set off from Greta Castle the following night, he had agreed to follow with Lord Wyndham, the morning ensuing. "You, dearest, and the child will remain here," he added, "during the fortnight of my absence. I shall not write to Holywell;—my mother would only raise some absurd objection. But on the day previous to that at present fixed for your return, send a little note to Sophia, explaining the affair. You will be happier

with the Spaldings than at home. They are very fond of you, Marian; they do you justice. I shall be quite satisfied to know that you are passing your time agreeably and among such kind friends. I really begin to like the family better than I used. I fancy my mother prejudiced me unnecessarily against them."

And the next day, in pursuance of their plan of campaign, the Greta party took an early departure from Spalding Court; and soon afterwards, at least three hours earlier than he was expected, and early enough to discompose every conventional form of comings and goings established by the Duchess in her little dominions, Mr. Leonidas Lomax made his appearance. He could not bear to lose an hour of the day fixed for his *début* on the scene of aristocratic life.

"Who on earth is the strange man I found just now in the library?" cried Lady Emily Maclaren, throwing herself out of breath on a chair in the Duchess's morning-room. "A

creature with long flat feet, and long straight arms, that holds its hat by its side like a footman waiting for an answer to a message,—and dressed in all the exaggerated finery of the *Journal des Modes*? It must be some monster that Lord Downham has picked up at Harrogate and sent here to amuse us."

"Who *can* it be?" cried Lady Annabel. "Aunt Marscourt!—rely upon it, it is the Editor of a fashionable Annual, come to beg for Mr. Chronos's stanzas upon poor Penelope."

"Did he make any inquiry of you, Lady Emily?" gravely demanded Lady Marscourt.

"No!—he only stared me out of countenance, and bowed me out of the room."

"It can be nobody but that Yankee uncle of Mr. Wemmersley's," cried Lady Honoria; "that dear, amusing, out-of-the-way creature, with the dyed eyebrows and rose-coloured waistcoat. What an hour for a man to arrive!"

"He must find his own amusements till din-

ner," said the Duchess, haughtily. "My sons undertake the men staying in the house during the morning;—and I fancy they are all dispersed for the day."

And thus poor Lomax, who had "calculated" on passing a happy morning, Corydonizing among the ladies, (ladies who were not only ladies, but ladyships!) found himself consigned to no livelier society than the marble busts of Demosthenes and Cicero,—Plato and Seneca. And not only the Duchess, but the fates seemed to be against him. After he had passed an uneasy hour in an easy chair, bolt upright, lest he should derange the set of his cravat, or the curve of his guard-chain, Chronos, MS. in hand, entered the room, to look in the dictionary for a rhyme to "furze;"—when Leonidas, seeing something ducal in everything at Spalding Court, addressed him "much as a farmer would a lord,"—"your Grace;" and inquired with assiduous politeness after the Duchess and their young ladyships.

Now, although Lomax would have found himself in the seventh Heaven to be mistaken for so illustrious a personage as the Duke of Spalding, it was not so with Chronos. Chronos looked upon Chronos as more distinguished in his nature than a prince of the blood; and, deciding that the dunce who knew him not must be himself unknown, deigned no explanation, but hastily withdrew; leaving the new-comer to note within his note-book, that Dukes in England are unsightly to the eye, and ungracious to the ear.

Nor could Leonidas have figured to himself that beneath a roof so aristocratic, in a chamber whose groined ceiling was emblazoned with lordly escutcheons, the time could pass so heavily as the solitary hour that ensued; and it was even some relief to him when a plain and somewhat meanly-attired middle-aged domestic entered the room and began to arrange a file of county newspapers on the reading table.

"I say, Mister!" said Leonidas, finding that his audible yawn attracted no notice from the under-butler, (for the man was too inferior in costume to the spruce Monsieur Lamarre who had ushered him in, to be anything but a subordinate,) "I say, Mister, do you think the Duchess knows I am here?"

"I conclude, Sir, you have been announced?" said the butler, eyeing the stranger-guest with a look of suspicion.

"I guess so. But I have been cogitating here these two hours, and not a soul coming within hail but the Duke, your master, who took me up so short that I scarce calculate his Grace understood me to be one of the Duchess's friends and guests."

"Nor I neither!" replied the butler, encouraged by the familiarity of Lomax to indulge in a laugh.

"Short reckonings make long friendships," returned the neglected visitor, producing a sovereign out of a very long purse and very

short pocket, and tossing it to his companion. "Let us understand each other, friend; and now be so good as go and announce me again to the ladies."

But neither bribe nor announcement served his cause. The Duchess was inexorable. Lomax had the mortification of seeing a barouche-full of waving feathers and gay peliesses drive from the door for a morning airing; and a riding party, consisting of Arthur and his wife, Lord Wyndham, Lady Honoria, and the Duke of Wetherby, pass the windows of the library. But no one came near him. He was deserted even by his friend the butler.

At length, finding himself indisputable monarch of all he surveyed, and tired of the solitude of his sovereignty, off he set, in defiance of his tight boots, to take a walk in the park; and although the somewhat savage character of its scenery suited his transatlantic fancy less in a pleasure ground, than the gracious and ornate cultivation of Holywell, yet comparing

it with his recent experience of his kinsman's contracted lawn at Mill Hill, he was forced to admit that it wanted only a little clearing to be mighty grand.

On his limping back to the house, Monsieur Lamarre deigned to acquaint him that as it was one of the public days at Spalding Court, he would find her Grace before dinner in the long gallery, but not till then. And when, after an elaborate toilet, he quitted the dressing-room appropriated to his use, and traversed the corridors towards the place pointed out, it was some consolation to his wounded feelings to encounter his friend, the neglectful butler, by the way. About to address him in no gentle terms of remonstrance, (for his protégé laughed heartily on perceiving him,) the attention of Leonidas was attracted by something which he "guessed" must bespeak a peculiar privilege of ducal dignity. He had not known before that the domestic servants of knights of the garter were permitted to assume that

badge of chivalry. But they were already at the doors of the gallery; which, being pompously thrown back by the footmen in their state liveries, the butler stood respectfully aside while the name of "Mr. Leonidas Lomax" was audibly announced. No one of the gay throng within came forward to receive him, for the Duchess and her daughters kept their state at the upper end of the gallery. But, to his great amazement, *every* one came forward to greet his companion—*the butler*, who followed him into the room; some bowing deferentially —some cordially shaking hands—but one and all saluting him by the title of Duke of Spalding.

If anything could have increased the mortification of the newly Toryfied citizen on discovering his unaccountable error, it would have been the fact that he had previously tendered his homage to so insignificant a thing as a mere writer of verses—a mere manufacturer of books.

The spectacle before him, too, was eminently calculated to enhance the dignity of a Duke of Spalding in his eyes. Hitherto, Holywell Park had afforded the highest model to his notions of domestic state; he had never guessed that anything so nearly approaching to feudal or royal magnificence existed in commercial England, as the public day of a lord-lieutenant. His feelings were excited by the gaudy liveries, the gay dresses, the splendid furniture. He bowed lower and lower to every one who caught his eye; and would have been quite ready to "milady" even the Duchess's waiting-woman.

In the course of the gay banquets that succeeded, Arthur Armytage was destined to a surprise almost as disagreeable as that experienced by Lomax. The arrival of the Marquis of Downham had operated a change in the family arrangements of the Spaldings. It appeared that there were papers to be signed requiring the aid of Lord Wyndham as heir

presumptive; and it was settled among them with as much ease as if the change of persons could make no difference to Arthur, that the apathetic Lord Leicester should replace his lively brother in their tour to the Highlands.

"I have no particular objection to the scheme," said he, when the project was proposed to him. "I like travelling. One never sleeps so well as in an easy carriage,—and as to the moors, although I do not shoot, I shall get my *ecarté* with Dumbarton and Brereton of an evening, and escape the *corvée* of making up the Duke of Spalding's nightly rubber. Tell Armytage I will certainly go."

An objection on Arthur's part seemed out of the question; and, the following morning, at day-break, a piece of furniture, very little more animated than the chaise-seat, was placed in his *calêche*, and away they bowled along the North Road, leaving Marian half terrified at the idea of being left to her own discretion in a house full of strangers; and Leonidas Lo-

max dreaming of stars and garters,—as much bemused by the pleasures of lordly life as Christopher Sly the Tapster.

CHAPTER XIV.

When I am froward,
My sullen humour punishes itself.
I'm like a day in March, sometimes o'ercast
With storms, but then the after clearness is
The greater.—The worst is, where I love most
The tempests fall most heavy.

DRYDEN.

MEANWHILE, affairs were proceeding less smoothly at Holywell Park. A ball is an event more easily forgotten by the guests who receive, than by the host who gives the entertainment; and although one of the greatest grievances attendant on such paroxysms of hospitality—long bills to be paid,—was a subject, of all, least important in the eyes of Mrs. Armytage, yet it greatly irritated her feelings to learn from Simmons and the rest, that the Thoroton people were indignant and

resentful, that any portion of her preparations should have been supplied from town; and from Wemmersley, that the Holywell carriage would certainly be pelted if seen to traverse the High Street of the Borough. Every body had been ill-used, either in his own person, or that of a fortieth cousin. "I that voted—I that promised votes,—I that gave a plumper, —I that brought up thirty,—I that spoke,—I that fought,—I that got out of a sick bed!" There was no end to the services which had been rendered to Arthur Armytage;—there was no end to the ingratitude with which they had been repaid!

But the ire of Gumption was the deadliest—implacable as it was silent. It was even said that he had smiled when the misconduct of the member was discussed in his presence; and the smile of such a man is known to be a fatal thing!

Nor were the friends of Mrs. Armytage much more cheering than her enemies. Dr.

Grant frankly admitted, on being interrogated, that he thought she had done an injudicious thing in breaking through the customs of the country; and as to the Maranhams, whom the ill-omened dinner party brought over to Holywell when her vexation was at its height, Mistress Di, incensed at the invitation conceded to the Spaldings, scolded her outright; while Miss Avarilla, shocked at having seen a dance of so equivocal a nature perpetrated at one of the most primitive mansions in the Riding, assured her that she looked on the Holywell ball as a very unfortunate affair. She confessed she was sorry that Rosamond had witnessed such an exhibition! It was in vain for Sophia to smooth down asperities and soften invectives. Her habitual task of peace-making was as fruitless as it was hazardous.

Nor were these wars and rumours of wars the only source of regret to the family. Lady Rotherham, having seriously suffered in health from her unusual efforts, was confined to her

bed with a rheumatic fever;—Mr. Wemmersley declared in imminent danger;—Mistress Di dropped the "imminent" and said "in danger;"—till Mrs. Armytage, in order to decide whether the substantive might not be subtracted as well as the adjective, determined to drive over to Greta Castle and ascertain the truth.

It happened that, in their progress, they encountered Gumption, for the first time since the ball; encountered him in a narrow part of the road, which afforded an excellent opportunity for a declaration of hostilities, by passing and making no sign! To the great surprise, however, of Sophia, who anticipated some such vulgar show of resentment, the attorney almost drew up as the carriage approached, in order to give force to the air of mock respect with which he lifted his hat from his head, and stood uncovered to receive their recognition. But Sophia was now more annoyed than before. A twinkle of triumphant

satisfaction was discernible in the attorney's deep-set eyes, which augured approaching calamity to the family.

On their arrival at the Castle, too, she had the mortification to learn that rumour had for once spoken truth. Lady Rotherham, though not in *imminent* danger, was confined to her bed by serious illness; and a better tribute to her unpretending excellence could not have been paid than in the gloom prevailing throughout her household. The domestics answered every inquiry with an air of mournful deference. The little children, instead of pursuing their noisy sports upon the lawn, were grouped quietly at the feet of the nurses as they sat moping under the beech trees. The elder ones pursued their studies with the governess with heavy hearts; and Lady Laura was sitting with the invalid. There is something holy—something touching,—in the sympathy of a large family in the sufferings of the mother of the house.

Lady Laura came, however, when apprized of the visit of her friends from Holywell. But she had nothing consolatory to impart. Her mother was infinitely worse; had experienced a violent attack of fever during the night. Within two days, her illness had increased from slight to alarming.

"I am beginning to regret," said she, "that I did not allow Greta to get off his expedition to the Moors. They would have done very well without him; but he had promised Arthur, and I did not wish him to break his word."

"Promised Arthur?—Promised Lord Edward Brereton, you mean," said Sophia, readily accounting for her friend's incoherence at such a moment.

"I mean *Mr. Armytage*," persisted Lady Laura. "You do well to remind me that our playfellow days are over,—which I am too apt to forget."

"But what interest had my son in the af-

fair?" said Mrs. Armytage. "Arthur is staying at Spalding Court, and would not, under any circumstances, have been able to enjoy Lord Greta's society."

"Oh! pardon me,—I thought you were aware——" replied Lady Laura, colouring and embarrassed.

"Aware of what?"

"Aware of Mr. Armytage's expedition to the Highlands," replied Lady Laura, who found it not in her nature to equivocate, when thus directly interrogated.

"Arthur's expedition to the Highlands?—You must be dreaming!" cried Sophia.

"Not at all. Your brother and Lord Leicester Spalding set off together for Glenvarloch yesterday morning—Greta and his friends, the preceding night."

"Most extraordinary, that he should have made a mystery of his intentions," observed Mrs. Armytage, gravely. "I have neither desire, nor authority, to interfere with my son's

movements; and it would have been just as easy to say he was going to the Moors as to Spalding Court. Of the two, the former visit would have appeared the less objectionable."

"And Marian and the baby?—Are *they* gone to Glenvarloch?" inquired Sophia, greatly annoyed.

"It amuses me to hear you so gravely demanding news of them from *me*," answered Lady Laura. "No! they are safe at the Spaldings'—very much admired, very much caressed, very much the fashion. Lord Edward returned here in raptures with the beauty and simplicity of Mrs. Arthur Armytage."

"She is in an admirable school for the improvement of her simplicity!" ejaculated Mrs. Armytage, with bitterness. "The Duchess, a woman without one matronly virtue;—the daughters, destitute of every charm of girlhood;—the Duke, a broken-spirited man, sunk into the degradation of a cypher in his own house;—the sons, mountebanks in manner,

bankrupts in character. What associates!—what models!"

"You paint them sadly *en noir*, my dear Mrs. Armytage," remonstrated Lady Laura. "Few characters look amiable when sketched in outline,—it is the filling-up, the light and shade, which gives them the charm. The Spaldings have very fascinating manners, and I fancy their dispositions are better than their understanding. At all events, they are quite enthusiastic in the cause of Mrs. Arthur Armytage,—which, considering her as a rival beauty near the throne, is at least an amiable trait."

"I can imagine them capable of paying court to her from selfish motives. They have invited that American relative of the Wemmersleys to Spalding Court, for instance, for the avowed purpose of making him their butt; what they intend to make of my daughter-in-law, I am yet to learn."

"How long will Arthur remain on the Moors?" inquired Miss Armytage.

"Not very long, I fancy. He and Lord Leicester return together."

"Lord Leicester, too, for a companion! What an attraction!" cried Mrs. Armytage.

'Leicester!—that mere white curd of ass's milk!'"

"He is less offensive than Lord Wyndham," said Lady Laura. "Lord Wyndham has just the air of a *Chevalier d'Industrie*. One can scarcely understand a man of his birth and education acquiring such an appearance, or exhibiting such vile taste."

"There is no calculating what a person may acquire in such a school as Paris!" said the prejudiced Mrs. Armytage. "But I am keeping you here, my dear Laura, talking of my own affairs; and no doubt you are anxious to get back to Lady Rotherham."

"My mother was asleep when you arrived, or I should not have quitted her. But I shall

not be sorry to return;—for I always fancy that, even in sleep, one misses from the room the person one wishes most to have there. I really fear poor mamma is very ill. You know how apt she is in general to be alarmed; and this time she has not uttered a single complaint. I never felt anxious for her health before."

"You must allow me to send to inquire in the course of the evening. Perhaps you will have a line or two in readiness, to tell me how she is."

"I will," said Lady Laura, taking Mrs. Armytage's hand at parting. "And if she should get worse—materially worse—I shall send over to Holywell; for it would be a great comfort to me to have your advice. Papa would be so completely overset by my mother's danger, that I should have no one's opinion to guide me."

"Certainly, my dear child," said Mrs. Armytage, with more cordiality than was usual to

her. And when she found herself again in the carriage with Sophia, she indulged in her new frequent exclamation of "Why was not she destined to be my daughter-in-law?" Sophia felt that it might lead her beyond the line of filial duty to answer such a "Why" with its true "Because."

The dinner that day passed in more than its usual solemnity of silence. Mrs. Armytage was sincerely afflicted by the danger of Lady Rotherham, whose mild virtues commanded her utmost respect, while Sophia was deeply grieved for her young friend: placing herself in Lady Laura's situation, she appreciated her filial anxiety. It was settled, therefore, that early in the evening, one of the grooms should be dispatched to Greta Castle for further tidings. But in the evening a circumstance occurred, which drove even Lady Rotherham's illness from the mind of Mrs. Armytage.

"I have some notes to write; do not bring tea at present," said she to old Simmons, who

had entered the room without a summons, and stood waiting, as if expecting to receive orders.

"I was not thinking of tea, Madam; it is scarcely eight o'clock," replied the old butler.

"Mamma is busy just now, Simmons," said Sophia, observing that he made no movement to leave the room.

"Are you too busy to listen to me, Madam?" inquired the old servant. "I have something unpleasant to say, and don't know how to begin."

And, to their great consternation, Sophia and her mother noticed that the old man's eyes were wet with tears. The thoughts of both naturally recurred to Greta Castle!

"Oh! that I should have lived to see this day—that I should have lived to see this day!"—was the only ejaculation they could extract from him.

"Has any message arrived from Lord Rotherham's?" demanded Sophia, laying her hand on his arm.

"What signifies Lord Rotherham's, Miss Sophia?" he faltered. "It is of Holywell you ought to be thinking. Oh! Madam — Oh! Miss Sophia. We have never ceased to say in the steward's room—to say and to prophecy—that no good would come of Master Arthur's settling to live in foreign parts, among cheats and spendthrifts."

"Arthur?—Has anything happened to my brother?—Have any bad news arrived from Spalding Court?" cried Sophia, still more and more alarmed, while her mother sat trembling in her chair.

"Not from Spalding Court, Miss."

"From the North, then?—We are aware that my brother is in Scotland."

"Is he?—Heaven's name be praised!—*He*, at least, is out of mischief's way; though Mr. Hardywood assures me they can't arrest a member of his Majesty's parliament."

"*Arrest*?" cried Sophy and Mrs. Armytage at the same moment.

"Yes, Miss—yes, Madam. Sooner or later it would have come to that. Here are two impudent scoundrels of attorney's clerks arrived in a hack chaise from Thoroton; and if that fellow Gumption be'n't at the bottom of it, may I never speak again!"

"Of the chaise?"

"Of this villainous business, my dear young lady."

"But what do these people want with my brother?"

"That's just what I asked them, Miss. Says I, 'Gentlemen,' (God forgive me for giving such a name to such vermin!) 'Gentlemen,' says I, 'What can the like of you have to say to Master Arthur Armytage?' Upon which says they, 'Old fellow,' says they, 'fetch him here, and perhaps you'll like to hear.' And when I informed them, Madam, that he was not in the house—'That 's a lie!' says they, for all the world as if they had been speaking to one of the stable-helpers. I answered again

that Master Arthur was gone on a visit to his Grace the Duke of Spalding. 'Oh! yes,' cries one to the other, 'Dukes and Lords—all alike! One of the Duke's sons has his name to two of the bills.'"

"The *bills?*" — reiterated Mrs. Armytage.

"Yes, Madam; for, Mr. Hardywood having been sent for, and knowing better than I how to enter into their business, it came out, that, many months ago, in France, Master Arthur signed bills of exchange for a matter of six or seven hundred pounds, which have been since what is called renewed, and since what is called dishonoured, and fallen into bad hands; and the fellows seem inclined to give all the trouble in their power."

"That need be very little," replied Mrs. Armytage, with dignity. "A bill bearing my son's signature must always be valid in my eyes. Nothing will be easier than to pay these people, and dismiss them."

Sophia breathed more freely; but old Simmons was not to be so easily pacified.

"Ah! my dear, good, generous lady!" cried he, "Will it be so easy to silence all the evil tongues yonder at Thoroton? These fellows of the hack chaise, it seems, have been passing the day at the Blue Boar—dining at the ordinary, as it was unluckily market day; and by this time, no thanks to anybody if it has not been cried at the town cross, that Master Arthur Armytage of Holywell, member of parliament for the borough, had been getting into scrapes in France, and giving bad bills to get out of them."

"If Arthur were but here!—I am sure he could afford some explanation of all this," cried Sophia, heartily grieved the business had not come first to her knowledge, that she might have immediately paid the demand from her own resources, without reference to her mother.

"His journey to Scotland was after all a matter of prudence," said her mother with a

bitter smile. "He did well to get out of the way of mischief, and leave me to settle his disgraceful embarrassments."

"I am quite sure my brother was unprepared for what has happened; for he well knew that *I* should have been only too happy to assist him," said Sophia, with as much firmness as she could assume.

"I flatter myself he had no right to suppose that his *mother* would have been less liberal," retorted Mrs. Armytage haughtily. "And bad indeed must be the nature of the business which he dared not disclose to either of us."

"Meanwhile these wretched men are waiting."

"True!—Simmons, send Hardywood hither, that I may give him my instructions. Or stay!—let them all attend me in the library."

"Mother! you *must* not undergo an interview with such people!" cried Sophia earnestly.

"Your brother's conduct renders it probable that it will not be the last of a similar nature by which the walls of Holywell will be disgraced," replied Mrs. Armytage. "Simmons, lights in the library."

"My dear mother!"—

"Say not another word on the subject," said Mrs. Armytage; "and remember that I forbid you to make the slightest allusion to it in your letters to your brother. I wish to be the first to speak to him of the affair,—and not till his return."

There was no occasion for Sophia to express her assent. A command from her mother *implied* obedience. Besides, she would have found it difficult to speak at that moment, for the poor girl was weeping bitterly.

CHAPTER XIV.

We talked with open hearts, and words
Affectionate and true;
A pair of friends, though I was young,
And Matthew seventy-two.

WORDSWORTH.

SOPHIA had, indeed, some cause to weep. Afflictions were coming heavily upon her; and, but for the excellent sense and right spirit within her, the fortitude of the gentle and delicate girl had given way unresistingly to their influence.

But the recent return of Dr. Grant to the Vicarage had secured her the comfort of an able and friendly counsellor; a counsellor beyond the circle of family affinity,—with no predilections to mislead his judgment, no excess of tenderness to be pained by her avowals of distress.

Doubly harassed by the new mortification arising from Arthur's indiscretion, Miss Armytage directed her walk through the shrubberies towards the village the following day, resolved to seek an interview with her worthy friend.

Dr. Grant, the Vicar of Holywell, was a man who had attained his sixtieth year, without obtaining higher preferment than a living of three hundred per annum upon a parish of two thousand souls;—the great tithes of which formed part of the appanage of the great Mrs. Armytage. Yet even for this advancement, he was indebted to her bounty;—having been but a humble curate on a sixth part of the salary, when, ten years before, she accidentally heard him preach while pausing for the Sabbath-day in the course of a tour through the North of England;—and was struck by the vigorous and uncompromising spirit of his doctrine, the benevolent mildness of his demeanour. The result of her inquiries into his

history and character immediately determined her to bestow upon the obscure divine the first piece of preferment in her gift; which, more fortunately for her than himself, happened to be the Vicarage of Holywell. But although no positive engagements existed between them, it was understood in the neighbourhood that her rich living of Thoroton was to be his when vacant: and, as is often the case when a meritorious postulant is to succeed a superannuated incumbent, the old rector still lived on, to keep the curiosity of such people as Wemmersley in suspense,—and the good pastor still a vicar.

On his vicarage, however, and his remote prospects, Dr. Grant, at the age of fifty, married; married to enjoy three years of perfect happiness; to bless Mrs. Armytage as its origin; and then become a widower, with two helpless little girls to remind him of his brief season of earthly comfort. And here was one of the instances in which the best qualities of Mrs. Armytage manifested themselves without

reserve. To those children she had been almost more a mother than to her own; had watched them through their infant sicknesses; ministered to their childish pleasures; spared them all evidence of her despotic disposition. To the shorn lamb she had endeavoured to temper the wind.

Dr. Grant felt all this as he ought; with a manly, heart-warm gratitude, but not in a slavish spirit. He saw all her faults,—none had ever seen them half so clearly; for he watched over her vocation as over that of the person who had been his second providence on earth. He even told her of them as none had ever told her. Fearless of offence, he stood before her as a minister of the gospel, reproving her pride both spiritual and temporal; and proving to her when none were there to hear, that her piety was a thing of weekly ceremony,—of matins and even song,—of worldly propriety,—of self-respect;—not an humbling in the dust as of a sinful soul before God;—

not the lowly thankfulness of mind, becoming one who had received from his hand an unmerited share of earthly blessings. For all this, Mrs. Armytage respected him the more,—but she liked him the less;—and the Sabbath days on which he preached upon such texts as the compensations of Lazarus in the world to come, —or the difficulty of a rich man to enter into the kingdom of heaven, were days of bitterness to *her*. He heeded not. He felt such words of comfort to be due to his two thousand poor parishioners, without reference to the wealthy patroness by whom his own fortunes were protected. The one crimson-lined pew in Holywell Church, with its rituals phrased in honour of Queen Anne, did not attract the exclusive attention of its minister of the Gospel.

Such was the instructor whom Arthur and Sophia had been so fortunate as to secure, and who was regarded by both with sincere and almost filial affection. Sophia was of all the

family his favourite. By him, her mild purity of heart and soul were duly appreciated. He loved her too for her kindness to his girls; for her willingness to impart to them such accomplishments, as were not inconsistent with their situation in life, although beyond his means of procuring: for, as he would not have diminished by one poor shilling what he considered the portion of the widow and orphan in his own small substance, in order to refine the education of Mary and Clara, it was to Miss Armytage alone they were indebted for their superiority in graces of demeanour to the mere children of the villager.

The vicarage, like every other tenement on the estate of Mrs. Armytage, was substantial and of creditable aspect, though proportioned to the revenues of the benefice;—the wise legislatress of Holywell feeling that she had no right to create a domicile for the present incumbent, which the less liberal views of *her* successors might render a burthen on the

hands of *his*. Nor had Dr. Grant expended time or money on its adornment. With the exception of a few greenhouse plants presented by Sophy to the children, and placed in order on either side the door, there was nothing to distinguish the mansion from the farm-houses of the neighbourhood. And yet, by some unexplained association of ideas, not one of the inhabitants of Holywell Park ever entered the gate, without a feeling of reverence, and a sensation of relief and refreshment; as if the place whereon they stood was holy ground. The good Doctor, all simplicity in his demeanour, would have smiled could he have known how much authority that very simplicity, that very carelessness of the things of this world, gave him in the eyes of the arrogant Mrs. Armytage;—for there, she felt him to be her superior.

"Are you very busy, Dr. Grant?" inquired Sophia, putting aside the unpruned branches of the old jessamine-tree, by which the vicar-

age was overgrown, to peep into the room where she knew he was at that hour to be found, giving instruction to his girls;—"or may I hope you will grant a holiday to the children, and give me your arm homewards?—I am tired with a long walk, and much in want of your support."

"Come in, then,—come in and rest," said the kind Doctor. "You do indeed look pale. Half an hour's quiet in this cool study will be more help to you than an old man's arm. Come in." And he came to lead Miss Armytage up the steps; and the girls, released by her presence from their books and maps, were at her side in a moment.

"Would she have a glass of wine,—a glass of water,—a cup of tea,—of coffee?"

No!—Sophia would have nothing but Dr. Grant's company in her walk; and, immediately suspecting that his young friend might have something urgent to communicate, he not only

complied, but forestalled the petition of his girls to be of the party, by assigning them tasks to be performed during his absence. Passing through the private door made from the vicarage garden into Holywell Park for his use, Sophia and the Pastor were soon sauntering arm in arm under the spreading elm-trees,—each waiting for the other to break silence.

"I have good news from Greta Castle," said he, at last. "One of my parishioners had business there this morning, and brings me word that Lady Rotherham is out of danger. It is unlucky that the express was already off to Scotland for Lord Greta."

"Very unlucky—most unlucky," answered Sophia. "I was in hopes he would have been absent for at least a month to come!"

"No very flattering wish for him to learn, my dear Miss Armytage. Old as I am, you must not fancy me so blind as not to discern

through my spectacles that his lordship is more ambitious of *your* good graces than perhaps of anything but a seat in the Cabinet."

"I do not indeed. I have no doubt you are perfectly aware of the state of things between us; and therefore it is I venture to speak so openly. I have, in fact, been long anxious to confer with you on the subject. Forgive the liberty I take in occupying your valuable time with my love affairs; but you know that for many years you have officiated as my second conscience. The only part of Catholicism to which I incline is the Confessional."

Dr. Grant saw that she was agitated and trying to gain time; and kindly assisted her efforts to recover her composure by a trivial remark on some passing object.

But Sophia had taken her determination, and would not falter. "If you are kind enough to remember all the flattering things you said to me two years ago of Arthur's friend, Mr. Rainsford, and the confirmation

you then gave of my own opinion that nothing but the inequality of our fortunes prevented his declaring an attachment to me and seeking my hand, you will not be surprised to hear that the preference I admitted I had formed for him, has prevented my giving a moment's thought to the attentions of Lord Greta or any other person."

"I remember every word of the conversation. I recollect encouraging you in what I considered a wise and honourable choice, because I knew the attachment to be mutual—(my Confessional is open to others besides yourself;) and believed Edgar Rainsford in the possession of great abilities and good connexions, to be secure of the means of independence—the only thing wanting to entitle him to ask you in marriage of your mother."

"Thank you, my dear Doctor—many, many thanks. You relieve the apprehensions I have latterly began to entertain that I had been too hasty—too vain—too presumptuous—

in interpreting what I regarded as unequivocal proofs of Edgar's affection."

"Make yourself easy on that point. There was nothing wanting but the declaration to yourself—the proposal to Mrs. Armytage. The most delicate, the most prudish young woman could not have blinded herself to the nature of Mr. Rainsford's feelings—*his feelings as they then existed.*"

"Ah! Doctor Grant!—that phrase conveys much to my ear,—more to my heart," faltered Sophia. "I perceive that the reports which have given me so much pain are public enough to have reached your ear."

"They have," replied her companion in a low voice. "I heard, as I was travelling in the north, that Edgar Rainsford had succeeded to a large fortune and was to marry a Miss—Miss—no matter what!—the name was not Armytage, and that was enough to startle and perplex me. I should have made further inquiries; but news came about the same time of

the injudicious doings at Holywell; and I returned home in haste, hoping to prevent one mischief, and relieve my doubts as to the other. Arthur's absence has been an obstacle to my better information."

"Say nothing, I beg you, on the subject to my brother—nothing to my mother. Arthur might feel inclined to resent what, in fact, is neither injury nor offence,—for, as you well know, no engagement fettered the inclinations of either; while my mother might perhaps express her satisfaction in a way painful to my feelings, for I am convinced she now wishes me to marry Lord Greta. But do me the very great favour to ascertain from others the real state of the case. If evil is to be known, I cannot know it too soon. I apply to *you*, my dear Doctor Grant, because I know you will consider the case dispassionately, without giving it too much or too little importance. You will not suspect me of unwarrantable regrets, of any inclination to play the Ophelia," she

added, faintly smiling,—"nor will you impute to me such levity of feeling as to fancy I could throw aside without a pang an attachment formed many, very many years ago—which has increased with the still increasing merits of the object. Commanding as he did the esteem of all whom I consider estimable, what cause had I to mistrust the prudence of my choice?"

"None, my dear young lady, none," said the kind old man. "If we find occasion to alter the opinion we had formed of Edgar Rainsford, let us accuse the frailty of human nature, the influence of worldly associations. As we once knew him, never did I see a young man I should have been so proud to call my son."

"Had we been really engaged to each other," continued Miss Armytage, apparently thinking aloud, "perhaps my attachment might have been lessened by security. But it was a thing of hope, of trust, of confidence. It was a tie admitted only by myself, of which I could confer with none,—the consolation of

many a vexatious hour,—the bright prospect irradiating many a gloomy one. I felt secure of happiness, of compensation, of a tranquil and honourable home."

"You will still find them. A spirit such as yours, my dear child, is pre-assured of domestic happiness," said the good Doctor, more affected than he wished her to suspect. "Let us suppose that this man has proved unworthy, there are others more deserving, The steady attachment, for instance, of Lord Greta——"

"No!—" interrupted Sophia. "Do not think so ill of me as to fancy that the affection which has been so long a part of myself, of my prospects, of my hopes for time and eternity, can be changed in a day, like the fashion of a garment!—No! my dear Dr. Grant, I have still a favour to ask of you; that, on his return, you will take an opportunity of relating to Lord Greta all I have been saying to yourself. Were he to make overtures to my mother necessitating a general explanation, he

would give me infinite pain, and cause, perhaps, a coolness between Arthur and his friend. It were better, therefore, he should understand that, whether Mr. Rainsford be lost to me or not, *I* am still unchanged, and still incapable of rewarding otherwise than with my graceless thanks, the preference of another."

"Of that commission, hereafter,"—replied the Doctor. "Let me first satisfy myself that my friend Edgar is a less honourable, a less discerning fellow than I have hitherto believed him. I shall very shortly ascertain the truth. Even before he became a fine gentleman and a man of fortune, I never found difficulty in obtaining intelligence of his proceedings. No man of his age ever rose to higher distinctions in his profession. Wonders were predicted of him. He was respected,—loved,—Well, well!—I will not give up my favourite prematurely——"

"Thank you—thank you"——

"I will write,—I,—Do not be afraid! I know what you would say. Trust to my discretion not to implicate your name in my inquiry. So far, at least, young lady, your confidant is safely chosen."

"We are approaching the house," said Sophia. "Let us walk more slowly; I am not in a state to meet mamma at present."

"I suspect, however, it is no very uncommon case for her daughter to return from the village,—from the bedside of the sick and the hearth of the afflicted, (if the testimony of my parishioners may be trusted,) with swollen eyes, and a tremulous voice?"

"I will not run the hazard of vexing her by the sight *to-day*," said Sophy, evading a reply to his question. "Mamma has just now troubles of her own which I should be sorry to augment!"

"Aha!—This daughter-in-law?—I was afraid so! Without believing all our neigh-

bour Wemmersley's reports on the subject, my observations at the ball lead me to fear that Arthur's wife is a giddy one."

"Not *giddy*;—light-hearted—wanting tact, wanting experience; but with a good, affectionate nature, and full of honesty and candour."

"*That* is much!—You, my dear Miss Armytage, must become her Mentor——"

"She ought not to have needed a Mentor. Thoughtless as Arthur is, my brother required a person of whose merits he stood a little in awe."

"Such as your friend Lady Laura? Mrs. Armytage has much to answer for in preventing that match!—But nothing must interfere with your exertions in favour of Mrs. Arthur. How long does she remain absent from Holywell?"

"*Too* long,—considering that she is among the Spaldings—and their set! Oh! Doctor Grant!—when I see such people as those, how

proud do I feel of my mother! How could I have borne to find myself the daughter of one of those unprincipled, frivolous, disreputable—but I will not revile them, even to render her justice. Admit, however, that there *is* real comfort in having a parent you can respect?"

"And a mind conscious of the benefit. And now good-bye, and God bless you! I see Mrs. Arnytage in the conservatory; and if I am delayed by the ceremonies of a morning visit, shall scarcely find time to dispatch my promised letter by the post."

CHAPTER XV.

What a mere dungeon is this house!
By no means large enough; and was it,
Yet this dull room and that dark closet,—
Those hangings with their worn-out graces,
Long beards, long noses, and pale faces,
Are such an antiquated scene,
They overwhelm me with the spleen.

COWPER.

FAR different was the march of events and the tone of conversation at Spalding Court!—*There* no cares prevailed for the future—no uneasiness for the present. No one remembered to turn the hour-glass; and time was only admeasured by the exhaustion succeeding to pleasure—by the glittering chandelier succeeding to the golden daylight—by the pillow of down yielding respite from the brilliancy of both. No moral responsibility appeared to moderate the glee of its thoughtless inmates!

Little did Lord Wyndham Spalding suspect into what a scrape his counsels, carelessly given, and his measures, imperfectly taken, had betrayed his friend Arthur Armytage;—little did he imagine to what unfair imputations his assiduities, mechanically tendered, were beginning to expose his friend Arthur Armytage's pretty wife. So long as he had the "*Céladon Sexagénaire*," the Squire Leonidas Lomax to mystify, and a prospect of the payment of his debts to secure a pleasant winter at Paris, his Lordship was tolerably indifferent to men, women, and things;—interested in nothing half so much as the success of a *Potage à la Reine*, composed of *blanc de faisan*, and a *purée* of filberts, for which he had just condescended to transcribe an inedited recipe of Carême's, for the benefit of his father's, or rather his *mother's, chef de cuisine*.

"I have a proposition to make you," said he, entering, one morning after breakfast, the music-room, where Marian was playing a ma-

surka, and Lady Emily Maclaren assiduously rehearsing it. "Will you both ride with me this morning as far as the Grange?"

"*Where* is the Grange?" said Lady Emily, "and *what*, and *why* do you want us to go there?"

"The 'where' I answer by—eight miles off, through a series of secluded woodlands; the 'what' by—one of the most curious architectural reliques of the Middle Ages remaining in England; the 'why' by—to see two sapient wiseacres make especial asses of themselves."

"But I can see *that* without going so far," answered her little Ladyship, still persisting in her *pirouettes*. "As to your Middle Ages, they have left us nothing in the shape of dwelling houses but a series of rickety closets, with high wainscots and low ceilings; and as to your woodlands, I desire nothing more secluded, in the way of ride, than the Brighton Downs or Constitution Hill."

"But in your catalogue of attractions," cried

Marian to Lord Wyndham, "you have omitted those living reliques of the Middle Ages, the Miss Maranhams?"

"I hate the sight of old maids!" cried Lady Emily. "I saw nothing else for the first ten years of my life. Mamma had apartments at Hampton Court."

"If you prefer the sight of young ones," observed Marian, "there is nothing so pretty to be seen as Rosamond Devonport."

"Rosamond Devonport—and who is Rosamond Devonport?" cried Lady Emily.

"That is just the question I overheard Downham asking this morning after breakfast, of the Lomax creature, who had been raving about her as the most beautiful *gurl*—the loveliest work of *natur*—in the county of York; and when I found that the blockhead had actually fired my brother's fancy so far as to drive over with him in his Pelham, and take an observation of this bright particular star, I began to tremble for my heirship pre-

sumptive,—I, who have so long succeeded in persuading Downham that he was *trop Cupidon* to find a Psyche worthy of his curls and complexion; that by marrying (as the French Machiavel said of place-giving), he would make a hundred discontented and one ungrateful,—*I*, to be cheated of my strawberry leaves by a *démocrate décrassé*, who seems bent upon manufacturing rivals for himself! *Parole d'honneur, ça n'aurait pas de nom!*— So, for charity sake, come and bear me company in my preventive service campaign. Let us make our appearance—'not single spies, but in battalions.'"

"Is this Fair Rosamond really, then, so fair?" demanded Lady Emily.

"Never saw her," replied Lord Wyndham, arranging the tiers of his own whisker-curls at a pocket-glass.

"Indeed you have.—She sat opposite to you at supper at the Holywell ball," said Marian.

"That pretty little thing, tricked out with

carnations and old point, like a *bergère en porcelaine de Saxe?*"

"Exactly."

"And you want me to ride eight miles through the dust, to prevent Lord Downham from marrying a Dresden-China shepherdess? I shall do no such thing!" cried Lady Emily.

"Yes, you will," said Winsome Wyn, smiling significantly at Marian; "for these Maranhams are the fiercest Whigs in Yorkshire; and if once they make Downham their own——"

"I suppose we must go," said Lady Emily to Mrs. Arthur Armytage, who desired nothing better than a pleasant ride. "So let us make a virtue of necessity."

And their habits were soon on and the horses soon ordered, and all three soon making their sauntering way across the country; through corn-fields, green lanes, and overshading wood, with the pale honey-suckle hanging fancifully from its boughs,—the startled woodpecker

uttering its shrill note of consternation—or the solitary stoat flitting stealthily across its unfrequented paths. The knight and his gentle ladies twain, escorted by a trusty squire wearing the colours of the house of Spalding, went pricking along the greenwood, as might those of Chaucer, Ariosto, or Cavalcanti; but alas! there was little chivalrous in their *gestes* or *faits*. Their talk, God wot, was of the smallest!—Scandal, fashion, politics,—"Shakspeare and the musical glasses."

"And this then is the Grange?" ejaculated Lady Emily, when at length they reached the moated gate. "Well! I admit it to be worth a visit! A place for Cattermole to paint and people with men in armour and women in farthingales!—How comes it you never brought me here before?"

"Because there is a deadly feud between these people and ours;—a war as of Crusader and Saracen. Nothing but old Lomax's safe-conduct would have obtained admittance for

my brother;—nothing but that of an Army-tage yours and mine."

"You should have told me so before we set yonder cracked tocsin jangling. See!—the ancient serving man is hobbling down the steps. Perhaps the monsters will be rude to us?"

"To Lady Emily Maclaren, the high-priestess of the Tories?—No doubt they will," said his lordship coolly; tickling with the end of his whip the nose of a grotesque mask, forming part of the decorations of the Gothic portal under which they were waiting.

"What could tempt you, then, to bring me here!" she exclaimed, getting really annoyed.

"For the satisfaction of seeing your colour rise as it does just now,—which is vastly becoming."

"They do not know you by sight, Lady Emily," observed Marian heedlessly. "Lord Wyndham can announce you as Lady Marscourt."

"Thank you! when the nearest peerage might inform them that Lady Marscourt is eight and forty!"

Lord Wyndham bit his lips, and smiled as little as he could.

"Let me then introduce you as my aunt, Lady O'Moran, whose name is not in the peerage, and who, I am quite certain, was never seen in Yorkshire."

"Do!—There would be some triumph in mystifying the creatures. Pray are Lord Downham and Mr. Lomax here?" inquired Lord Wyndham of the servant, wishing to ascertain whether the scheme could be attempted in safety.

"There's no lord whatsoever residing here," mumbled the deaf old man. "This be the Grange, and belongs to my young missuses,—the Miss Maranhams."

"I know, my good fellow, I know! We are come to visit your young missuses. But

have they no other visiters with them at present?"

"No!—There was the old Injee gentleman that comes courting Miss Diana, and another young chap with him, an hour agone," said the surly porter, mollifying as he caught sight of the coronet and crest on the livery-button of the Spalding Court groom. "But they are away again."

"Too late, you see! Thanks to the age and a half required by the ladies to change their *peignoirs* for their *amazones!*" said his lordship reproachfully to his companions. "Well,—at least we may have a glimpse of the Dresden shepherdess?" And he gave their names to the old man, who, little accustomed to announce strange visiters, simplified them into "a gentleman and two ladies," as he ushered the party into the sitting-room.

"We need not have distressed ourselves to find an alias," said Lady Emily, peevishly to

Lord Wyndham, on the threshold. But he did not answer. His attention was riveted by the picturesque character of the scene within.

Occupying her usual seat, a high-backed ebony chair placed in the deep recess of the Elizabethan window, the pale invalid Margaret Maranham was winding a skein of silk from the hands of Rose Devonport, who knelt at her feet; one single ray of sunshine glancing through the half-closed oaken shutter, and shining upon the long silken curls adorning her sweet and smiling face. Every thing there was ancient and time-worn but Rose;—the old parlour, the carpeting of faded tapestry, the grim pictures in their dusky frames, the heavy, overwrought cornices, the cold, chilly-looking spinstress. But Rose was bright as a cloudless summer day,—all flowers, sunshine, and happiness.

Having risen from her knees to welcome Mrs. Arthur Armytage, with whom she was well acquainted, and to go through the forms

of introduction to the two strangers, she led Marian to the window to be presented to the clay-coloured figure in the chair; and in reply to Miss Margaret's inquiries after her good friend Mrs. Armytage and Sophia, the visiter had only courage to reply, "I am not at Holywell at present. I rode over from Spalding Court with Lord Wyndham Spalding and—*my aunt;*" and Miss Margaret bowed mechanically to Lord Wyndham and the "aunt," while Rose Devonport, having taken care to find seats for them at some distance from the window, observed that Miss Maranham was too great an invalid to enter much into society,—and immediately began conversing with all the ease and grace of a person with whom good sense and good feeling supply the place of knowledge of the world. They talked of the Holywell ball, of the expected gaieties of the races, of the beauties of the neighbourhood, of the curious antiquity of the old manor-house, as if long and intimately ac-

quainted. Winsome Wyn was enchanted!—He thought his *bergère* exquisitely lovely; and began to trust in earnest, what he had hitherto affected to hope in jest, that Lord Downham had not been successful in procuring a glimpse of the cynosure of the Grange.

"As you were never here before," said Rose, when at length subjects of discourse grew scarce, "perhaps you would like to take a view of our enchanted castle? We are very proud of our screen of trees."

Lady Emily protested against the possibility of walking five hundred yards in a riding habit; but on Marian and Lord Wyndham expressing great curiosity, she agreed to rest herself, then return; and immediately assumed a lounging attitude in the stiff gilt leather chair in which she was seated, and which seemed to promise anything but repose; while the three others, after traversing the gloomy old hall, in which two trophies of rusty arms were tastelessly displayed, stepped upon

the terrace, whose velvet turf, the result of many hundred years of care, and symmetrical down-feathering trees, presented a feature almost as peculiar as the mansion. Again Lord Wyndham was enchanted!

Just, however, as Marian was beginning to make inquiries of her young companion concerning the Holywell dinner-party, which she found the Maranhams had really attended, they espied Mistress Di in proper person coming towards them, habited in her usual Amazonian fashion, and looking much like the effigy of the Chevalier D'Eon, as the frontispiece to some popular magazine of the last century. But Mistress Di was out of sorts. Something had transpired in the course of the visit of the "old Injee gentleman" to render her always abrupt manners more than usually ungracious; and, not being at liberty to quarrel with her visiters, she took occasion to vent her spleen by scolding poor Rose for bringing out Marian and Lord Wyndham, without having

first introduced them to the luncheon-room. In vain did they both protest that they needed no refreshment. Mistress Di was, according to her custom, peremptory.

While they regained the house Miss Devonport hastened to invite the lounging lady to join the party; and as Lady Emily followed her into the dining-room, Marian found it indispensable to reply to the scrutinizing glances of Mistress Di by a formal introduction. She almost trembled as she named to the cross but shrewd old woman, "My aunt, Lady O'Moran;" but she trembled still more when her hostess in a stern voice repeated—"Your *what*?—WHO?"

"My aunt, Lady O'Moran."

"Rose, child!—go to my sister; my sister wants you. *Remain* with my sister!" cried Mistress Di, not deigning to return Lady Emily's negligent bow, and almost turning her back upon Marian; nothing could be plainer to all parties than that their absurd subterfuge was discovered! Lord Wyndham, however,

was not to be easily disconcerted; and as they sat down to a table richly and plenteously spread, he engaged the old lady in a conversation which left her no leisure to make herself disagreeable. He admired, in the tone of a connoisseur, the curious service of embossed delft, of at least a century's antiquity,—the finely-wrought silver tankards,—the characteristic carving of the old eating chamber, with its stag's heads, music gallery, and buttery-hatch; praised the highly-spiced brawn, and a Yorkshire pie, which he chose to call *poularde désossée aux fines herbes*, with sundry other dainties, such as may be found on provincial tables, provided with an old-fashioned cook and cookery-book, and whose quotidian fare is daily blessed by his ghostly reverence, a chaplain. But, while he talked to Mistress Di, he attended silently to his fair companions; for not one word of civility did their hostess deign to address to either. Lady Emily in sullen silence sugared her golden

raspberries, while Marian affected to busy herself with a tawny-cheeked apricot; both heartily wishing themselves back at Spalding Court.

"We do not boast, like your mother, the Duchess, six acres of glass in our garden," said the old lady, when Lord Wyndham did justice to the exquisite flavour of her fruit. "But, with a southern wall and stocks grafted from those which my great-grandfather's friend King William sent over to him from the Hague, we can produce an apricot worth eating. The overgrown, washy things your famous Horticultural Societies are poisoning the country with, appear to *my* palate little better than pumpkins; and when I see people like the Wemmersleys (your mother's toadies) with a park like a billiard table, and a house like a bird-cage, growing turnips and pretending to call them pine-apples, I must own it puts me into conceit with our golden pippins,—the only ones, I fancy, remaining in England."

"Pray order the horses," whispered Marian to Lord Wyndham, under cover of this dissertation; greatly alarmed lest they should not quit the house without an explosion of wrath from Mistress Di.

"We appear to have driven Miss Devonport away,—I am greatly afraid we have deprived Miss Devonport of her luncheon?" said he, rising and making a signal from the window to the groom. "Shall we not have an opportunity of offering her our compliments before we go?"

"Miss Devonport is very well where she is," said the old lady, without the least ceremony; looking fiercely at his two companions who were preparing for departure.

"I admit, my dear madam, that I am an unwarrantable trespasser here," resumed his Lordship, pretending to take her displeasure upon himself. "But, under the sanction of Mrs. Arthur Armytage, I trusted you would condescend to accept even the homage of a Spal-

ding. I need not say how much satisfaction it would give my father and mother, if you could be induced to think the distance to Spalding Court a less insuperable obstacle than formerly!"

"Distance is never an obstacle to a visit I *wish* to pay," was the blunt reply. "I choose my own friends and acquaintances, and I hope I know how to behave to them. When people choose *me*, they must take me as it suits my humour to be found." And again she looked fiercely at the retreating figures of Marian and Lady Emily.

"Certainly—certainly. The Duchess will be quite contented with any humour you consider becoming or find convenient," said he, trying the moral experiment of a rough grasp upon the nettle; "provided you accept her own courtesies in return." And once more he pleaded for a renewal of acquaintanceship between the families.

"Your elder brother has been already here

on the same fool's-errand," said Di; "and I told *him*, as I now tell you, that forty years ago your father, the Duke, used to come ambling to the Grange, much as you have done to-day. Ask him why he made an end of *his* visits, and I will tell *you* why I refuse yours. My Lord! good morning. While you have been wasting your time with me, the two individuals whom I trust I have seen here for the last time, have been obliged to accept the services of your groom."

And, Lord Wyndham's audacity being now at fault, he was obliged to obey her pompous gesture of dismissal, and make his parting bow.

"Could one have believed that such a specimen of the barbarous ages still existed in civilized Great Britain!" cried Lady Emily, very audibly, as he leaped upon his horse; looking through her glass at the open window of the eating-room, where she had left Mrs. Di. Then, having recovered her *sang froid* suffici-

ently to get through three or four bars of "Adieu, thou dreary pile!" she touched her horse, and led the way across the old drawbridge.

"What a visit!" said Marian, recovering her breath.

"What a woman!" responded Lady Emily.

"What an angel!" sighed Lord Wyndham.

"*Who*,—Mistress Maranham?" cried both ladies.

"Miss Devonport!"

"That Hecate had completely driven her out of my head!" said Lady Emily. "But now you remind me of her, allow me to put in an early claim for wedding favours from the Marquis and Marchioness of Downham."

"No such thing!—I intend to marry her myself."

"*You?*—You will never marry mortal woman, unless Mrs. Glasse has left a grand-daughter!" retorted her Ladyship. "No!—it will

be just the thing for our friend Downham. His popularity wants refreshing; and a very pretty wife, whom nobody ever saw or heard of,—picked fresh and fragrant, like a strawberry in a wood,—will be just the thing to bring him once more into vogue."

"But that dreadful old woman!" cried Marian, unable to forget the fright she had received.

"Oh! dreadful old women and charming young ones, become alike placable to Dukes apparent!" said Lady Emily. "Every thing is in favour of the match. A difference of religion, of politics, of rank, of fortune; all which must create a thousand difficulties most attractive to an enterprising young man such as Lord Downham. I shall give him my advice and encouragement, the moment I am safe at Spalding Court." And, by no means inclined to forgive Lord Wyndham for having decoyed her into a snare and exposed her to Di's im-

pertinence, she persisted, throughout the remainder of the ride, in tormenting him in the same strain.

"*Entre nous*," was his final reply, "I fancy we had better keep our own counsel respecting this unlucky visit and its results. No one likes to pass for a *malencontreux*, and you will find the laugh decidedly against us and our expedition to the Grange."

CHAPTER XVI.

Despised, ashamed, his noble views before,
And his proud thoughts degrade him now the more.
CRABBE.

BRIGHT as were the passing hours at Spalding Court, twenty-four of them did not the less complete a day; and joyous as were the days, seven of them were not the less apportioned to a week. Marian soon found herself under the necessity of dispatching her letter of excuses to Holywell; and when Sophia's answer came, hinting a hope that her sister-in-law might be persuaded to pass the remainder of Arthur's absence at home, his wife was prompt in her reply that she was already irrevocably engaged to the Duchess. Miss Armytage only said—"We want you much, and we want the baby." Had she added—"Dear Marian, I am ill and

unhappy, and your presence would be a comfort to me,"—her sister-in-law would have resigned fifty Duchesses, and a thousand parties of pleasure, to comply. But Sophia knew this; and was not in the habit of interfering with the pleasures of any human creature. She had not courage to sadden the light-heartedness of Marian.

Nor was the second week at Spalding Court less attractive or less varied in its pleasures than the first. They had music, dancing, boating, archery, tableaux, charades, theatricals—"everything by turns, and nothing long." New people arrived; and, as the delight of Lomax increased with the appearance of every fresh carriage bearing a coronet on its panels, he soon esteemed himself the happiest of mankind. Even the disagreeable recollection of "that 'ere trifle" he had so blindly and wantonly offered to the Duke, was lost in the favours showered upon him by the Duchess, who had already persuaded him to put down

his name for fifty pounds each to seven of her pet charities; to subscribe to the libraries she patronized; give a commission for a picture to a young artist it was part of her business to *proner* into notice; and purchase, unseen, a pair of Etruscan vases, belonging, she assured him, to a royal emigrant, whose name must not be implicated in the transaction. The management of even so small a part of Mr. Leonidas Lomax's twelve thousand per annum, increased her Grace's happiness (her correspondence) by at least five franks a day!

Nor was this all. Lord Wyndham and his sisters, taking pity on their superannuated baby of a cousin, or regarding the annual summer visit of Miss Penelope as far from indispensable to their happiness, undertook to persuade him that a very pretty Miss Rosamond Devonport was by no means so desirable a connexion as a very pretty *Honourable* Miss Marscourt—the Honourable being, in fact, the lovelier *gurl* of the two. The prospect of an

alliance with the peerage proved an irresistible bait. Penelope, too, was nothing loth. At six-and-twenty, she had begun to despair of exchanging the coral necklace for a diamond one; and when Lady Amabel assured her that Leonidas had determined to give up his "niggers" for her sake, and modify his uncuphoneous name in order to induce her to change her own, Penelope admitted that she had always thought him a remarkably sensible man.

"Mamma intends to patronize him, so you will find no great difficulty in getting him into society," said Lady Amabel, coolly.

"And we must manage to *glisser* the man into parliament after he has been naturalized; and then Lady Emily Maclaren will take some trouble to push him forward, for the sake of his vote," added Lord Wyndham.

"If it were not for that horrible republican prefix of 'Leonidas,' *I* should recommend a Baronetcy," hinted Lord Downham.

"*A quoi bon?* 'Mrs. L. Lomax Marscourt': will look quite *distingué* enough, over a good opera-box," resumed his brother.

And, thanks to these able and judicious counsels, L. L., with his whiskers double-dyed, and his patent elastic caoutchouc perruque more spruce and wiggy than ever, was now seen wandering by the side of the Honourable Penelope, wherever the shrubberies were shadiest, to the infinite amusement of the whole party at Spalding Court. Lady Marscourt, a dowager Viscountess with a small jointure and a suit in Chancery, pretended to look displeased, and to talk about *mésalliances;* but she allowed the happy pair to pursue their peripatetic courtship unmolested, and the course of their true love to run smooth.

Meanwhile, Marian, in all their walkings, drivings, boatings, and dancings, fell naturally to the share of Lord Wyndham Spalding. *She* sought him as the man of the party with whom she was best acquainted, and the inti-

mate friend of her husband: he *her*, because, as a younger brother, he had not the pretensions of an L. L. to engross the attention of unmarried ladies; nor, destitute of a vote in the House, to offer himself as the cavalier of a Lady Emily Maclaren. Such, doubtless, were his motives for attaching himself to the side of pretty little Mrs. Arthur Armytage; for applauding her touch on the piano—her seat on horseback; for caressing her little Harriet, agreeing with her that Yorkshire was a bore, and earnestly persuading her to pass the ensuing winter at Paris. Lord Downham and Lady Emily sometimes smiled at each other after noticing their whispers; but then his Lordship's pearly teeth were still well worth showing, and Lady Emily Maclaren was his faithful *double*. Neither of them was capable of comprehending the perfect innocence of a nature such as Marian's.

Had it not been for the consciousness that immediately on Arthur's arrival they must re-

turn to dull, formal, solemn Holywell, to the severe countenance of Mrs. Armytage, and the certainty of giving hourly displeasure, she would have found the time of Arthur's absence long and tedious. Apprehension of Greta Castle and of her mother-in-law still, however, held paramount influence over her mind. In a month, she was to see her father and accompany her family to Scarborough with her husband and child. But the prospect of the four miserable weeks still dividing her from such perfect happiness, filled her with consternation.

All, however, was forgotten as the moment drew near for Arthur's arrival!—Vainly did the wives of divers sportsmen, guests in the house, assure her that punctuality on such occasions was out of the question; that with a gay party on the Moors and only a home and wife and child awaiting him in Yorkshire, Mr. Armytage would assuredly be a day or two, perhaps a week, after the appointed time. But

Marian was not afraid.—There was no Lady Laura Greta on the Moors: and Lady Laura was the only person interposing between Arthur and her perfect confidence.

Then, Lady Emily Maclaren, intent on tormenting a woman who had so little *usage du monde*, so little tact, as to avow her implicit reliance on her husband's word, assured her that Lord Leicester would infallibly delay the journey by forgetting his ebony boot-jack, and returning fifty miles to fetch it, lest the pattern of that unique piece of household furniture should fall into the hands of Brereton or Dumbarton; as he had once been known to do when on a visit at Penshanger. Still, her mind was at ease.—Arthur would not be staying at Greta Castle to wait the return of his travelling companion; and a few hours, more or less, were of little consequence. And, as it happened, her confidence was more than justified. The travellers made their appearance on the evening preceding the day ap-

pointed for their return. Lord Leicester not having found an inn of sufficient merit to come between the road and his nobility, had chosen to eat, drink, and sleep in the carriage. Again, however, Lord Downham and Lady Emily interchanged a smile; choosing to espy a jealous motive for Arthur's premature return.

Marian, meanwhile, was the only person to whom his coming afforded satisfaction. All at Spalding Court were sorry to lose her. Amid the egotism of the great world, an unselfish person is sure to become a favourite, even with those who want acuteness to discern the source of her attraction. Marian was good-naturedly ready to play for those who wanted to dance, to dance when her assistance was useful;—to talk to the bores, to listen to the prosy; to soften grievances, and subdue murmurs. She had pity for all human misfortunes,—from Lady Marscourt's rheumatism, to the false stitches in Lady Amabel's tapes-

try; and was ready to lend her chaperonage to those expeditions of Lady Honoria and her sister, for which Mamma, or Aunt Marscourt, would have been *de trop;* or to creep out of the way of startling the timid courtship of two such tender doves as Leonidas and Penelope. Even the unobservant Duke of Spalding had taken note of her merits, as simple, artless, and a more respectable companion for his daughters than he was in the habit of seeing established in their society.

"I am enchanted to find you are going to Scarborough in October, my dearest Mrs. Armytage," cried Lady Honoria, at parting. "Mamma has taken a house there for a fortnight's bathing. If the weather will admit, Downham is to bring round his yacht; and we shall have Wyndham and Cecil, and a charming party. You must be always with us,—remember, I bespeak you to be always with us."

"We can settle all that at Doncaster races,"

added Lady Amabel. "Don't forget that you belong to us for Doncaster."

"But the races are not for three weeks," interrupted the Duchess; "and we must manage to meet before that time. Do, my dear child, see if you cannot coax Mrs. Armytage into better humour with us all? Tell her that it will require very black looks on her part to keep us away from Holywell while *you* are there."

"*Sans adieu!*" was Lord Wyndham's farewell whisper; "I shall continue to quarter myself on our convenient friend Wemmersley for a few days, in the course of next week."

"How very, very kind, they all are!" said poor Marian, when at length extricated from their civilities, she found herself once more *tête-à-tête* with Arthur in the carriage.

"They are good natured, friendly people,—we shall find them a great resource," was Arthur's frank reply. "I wish they lived nearer

Holywell. Holywell, between ourselves, *is* monstrously dull. I feel almost ashamed of my repugnance to returning there. But there is something so overpowering in the punctilious regularity of the house; the pragmaticality of those tiresome old servants (who might be so easily pensioned off)—and the—the—by heavens! it gives me the shudders to think of it all! Ah! Marian, I wish we had a snug little home of our own. I wish I had taken your father's advice, and settled at once in a cheerful hunting country. My mother would take it as an offence, were I to propose such a thing now!"

"Indeed she would!" was Marian's reply, giving an involuntary sigh to the notion of a "home of their own," where she might have sometimes hoped to welcome her family,—her kind parents, her cordial aunt; but adding, in a tone of mild resignation, "I fancy we must reconcile ourselves to the idea of living with Mrs. Armytage for the remainder of her life."

"More particularly as Sophia will probably marry. And how unbearable Holywell will be without Sophia!"

And even Marian shrank from the thought of losing the peace-maker, and confronting a perpetual *tête-à-tête* with Mrs. Armytage!

"Well, well! it is not come to that yet!" cried Arthur, trying to cheer her spirits; and with his characteristic recklessness, immediately launched into a thousand lively anecdotes of his campaign on the Moors; a recital of his sporting exploits,—of the harmless absurdities of Leicester Spalding—"*faisant supporter aux autres tout le poids de son inutilité*;" of the love-at-sight passion of young Dumbarton for Lady Honoria Spalding; and the self-delusion of the dandy Lord Edward, in trying to bully himself into sportsmanship.

Marian laughed at all her husband's stories, and was thankful to him for saying so little of Lord Greta; without suspecting that with *him* her husband's conversations had been of too

rational and serious a nature, to bear repeating for her amusement. In her turn, she related all they had been doing during his absence,—every little pleasantry,—every little folly—even their ill-timed, ill-ordered visit to the Maranhams. With the folly and meanness of Lomax, he had no patience;—"at *his* age, so base a desertion of principle and national feeling was inexcusable;" but all the rest diverted him,—from the sudden departure of Mr. Chronos on learning the expected arrival of a Yankee conversation-man, a riglar New York Addison, one of the small lionkins of London dinner-tables,—to the *gaucherie* of a country-neighbour who, after sitting through a dinner by the side of the silent Mr. Maclaren, began talking to him with his fingers, on the supposition that he was deaf and dumb. Marian was in high spirits,—animated by the satisfaction of being with him she loved,—animated by the excitement of the gay scenes through which she had been passing. Her

cheek was flushed,—her eye bright,—her voice joyous.

But, lo! as they approached Holywell, a change came o'er the spirit of her dream. Involuntarily her laugh ceased, her voice grew depressed, her countenance gloomy; Arthur, too, became absorbed in reflection. Observant of the alteration in Marian's spirits, he felt himself scarcely just in exposing her to the despotism from which she was entitled to emancipation. They were approaching as victims, almost as culprits, a home by right their own; they were going to frame an humble apology for a week's disposal of their own time, —that time so independent of any human control.

"I am driven to the shabby expedients of renewing bills and raising money by the aid of my friend Wyndham's blackguard agents, for the want of a paltry seven hundred pounds. I—entitled to the clear possession of twelve thousand a-year," ran the current of his medi-

tations; "while, only yesterday, I saw an announcement in the county paper in a list of subscriptions for the building a county hospital, 'Mrs. Armytage of Holywell, *a thousand pounds*—His Majesty, 100*l.*—the Archbishop, 200*l.*;'—but Mrs. Armytage of Holywell, 1000*l.*! Well! after all, there is something princely in my mother's notions! One is proud of belonging to a woman capable of sacrificing the foolish whims and fancies of her sex, to contribute a thousand pounds to so useful a purpose. My mother *has* a noble spirit. Had *I* been master of the Holywell estate, I doubt whether I should have been capable of sacrificing a thousand pounds to the construction of an hospital!"

But this expansion of feeling suddenly contracted when he found himself once more in presence of Mrs. Armytage. Sophia flew to the hall-door to receive them; and, taking her little niece from the arms of its nurse, covered

it with kisses, so that Arthur had no opportunity of observing how pale and haggard were his sister's looks; but nothing could be more frigid, more formal, than his mother's reception of the little family. She asked no questions, made no remonstrances; spoke of nothing that had occurred during their absence, and seemed unaware that they had been more than an hour away.

Both Arthur and Marian began to rejoice that they had been persuaded to set off late from Spalding Court, so that dressing-time was approaching when they arrived at Holywell. Both were eager to get out of that formal drawing-room. Each was anxious to complain to the other of the ungraciousness of Mrs. Armytage.

But when Arthur reached his own room, the mystery was explained. On the dressing-table, inclosed in a blank cover, addressed by the hand of his mother, lay his own unlucky ac-

ceptances; — bills of exchange for 700*l.*, — *dishonoured* bills, bearing the signature of "Arthur Maudsley Armytage!"

It was scarcely a consolation to him to see them lying cancelled before him, when he considered that their redemption must have been the act and deed of Mrs. Armytage!

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MRS. ARMYTAGE;

OR,

FEMALE DOMINATION.

BY THE

AUTHORESS OF

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IN THREE VOLUMES.

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FEMALE DOMINATION.

CHAPTER I.

A slumber did my spirit seal,
I had no human fears;
She seemed a thing that could not feel
The touch of earthly years.

WORDSWORTH.

UNNATURAL must be the state of things in a family, where a child presumes not to give utterance to the grateful and affectionate feelings swelling in its bosom towards a parent. There must be a fault somewhere, perhaps on one side, more probably on both.

And such was the case with Arthur Armytage. Overjoyed to find himself honourably released from his difficulties, thankful to his mother for her aid, and, perhaps, scarcely less so for being spared the disagreeable task of

breaking the subject to her in person, he felt under the necessity of putting a constraint upon his expressions, in uttering his acknowledgments to Mrs. Armytage. He dared not be natural. He was afraid of saying too much, or too little; of implying something capable of giving umbrage to her susceptible temper. She was so little accustomed to forget the legislatress in the mother, that he dared not exhibit half so warmly as he could have wished the tenderness of a son.

His thanks, accordingly, though prompted by a thousand good and tender emotions, were formally and confusedly tendered; and Mrs. Armytage felt convinced that Arthur was more vexed at finding his indiscretions detected, than gratified to have been so gratuitously relieved. If not ungrateful, she had at least a right to consider him ungracious. She had expected more from him; and grew colder, and less communicative, in proportion to her disappointment.

The glowing terms, too, in which Marian,

with her usual frankness, depicted the pleasures of her visit to Spalding Court, vexed and displeased her. Her own career had been traced at so vast a distance from frivolous diversions and fashionable exploits, that she regarded them as an impertinent intrusion upon the business of life; and was of opinion, that they could interest and enliven only the silliest and most trivial of the human race. But when the actors of the drama were such people as Spaldings and Maclarens, her condemnation went much farther; levity became immodesty in her sight, and indiscretion, guilt.

Nor had she patience with the manœuvres, which, purporting only amusement to the giddy triflers by whom they were devised, went so far as to convert a respectable individual like Lomax into a blockhead and a laughing-stock, and to disappoint the expectation of her friends the Maranham family. Arthur and Marian described Leonidas and Penelope as likely to form a most ridiculous and entertaining couple; while Mrs. Armytage regarded

marriage as too sacred a thing to be rendered a matter of buffoonery.

But Arthur found serious causes of annoyance on his return to Holywell, to diminish the impression of his mother's ill humour. Thoroton was in arms against its member; Gumption, disappointed of his petty vengeance, more vindictive than ever. The Blue Boar grinned and showed its tusks; while a County paper, of no very reputable notoriety, diverted its readers, week after week, with anecdotes of the pride, pomposity, parsimony, and pretensions, of the Armytages of Holywell.

But this was not the worst. Once pointed out to his notice by the affectionate vigilance of his wife, Arthur could no longer blind himself to the alteration which a few short weeks had effected in the health and appearance of his sister. Sophia, gentle and uncomplaining as ever, was wan, thin, dispirited, the shadow of her former self. Her constitution, at all times delicate, had been strengthened in early life by the influence of regular habits and

country air; but now even these were losing their effect. Her brother began to apprehend that she might be becoming consumptive; and trembled lest the perpetual worry of her mother's temper should have exercised a fatal influence over his amiable and estimable sister.

The influence of disappointed hopes, of blighted affections, did not for a moment occur to his mind. Arthur's easy temper and happy temperament placed him beyond the range of such ascendency. His sensibility was much on a par with that of the rest of his sex. Thwarted in his early attachment to Lady Laura Greta, he had drowned his own sighs in the tantarara of the trumpets of the Life Guards, and converted himself, in the course of six months, from "the most miserable of men," into one of the gayest and wildest of flirting fellows about town; while his sudden fancy (it was little more) for Marian Baltimore had been too immediately crowned with success, to amend his insight into the griefs of an unhappy attachment.

Although, too, he had always conjectured that his friend Rainsford entertained an affection for Sophia, which Sophia at some future moment would probably requite with her hand, he had not been made the confidant of either, —had no notion of the extent of their regard, —and when he heard it vaguely rumoured that Edgar was to marry the daughter of Lady Emily Romer, flattered himself he had been hitherto under a mistake, and rejoiced that his friend Greta had thus a better chance of becoming his brother-in-law: for Arthur liked Rainsford much, but Greta, more. Greta occupied a position more consonant with his own; he had of late years seen more of him,—was his country neighbour, his brother Whig. He could not desire a happier alliance for Sophia. But, alas! her present enfeebled condition rendered all these prospects precarious; and though he did not dare accost her with such affectionate inquiries as might alarm her respecting her own state of health, Arthur could no longer forbear ad-

verting to the subject in conversation with his mother.

To his surprise, Mrs. Armytage was unconvincible; and seemed even angry at any allusion to Sophia's indisposition. Some people have no better mode than sullenness of evincing sorrow. She attributed her daughter's weakness to the heat of the weather; and at length silenced him by an assertion he had not the means of controverting, that Sophia had been bitterly afflicted by the recent mortification entailed on the family by his own indiscretion. It is true, the first striking change in her appearance dated from the very epoch of Gumption's nefarious exposure of the pecuniary distresses of Arthur Armytage.

Dr. Grant, meanwhile, true to his promise, confided not a word to Sophia's brother touching the true cause of her despondency, for he knew it was now too late for brotherly interference to prove available; and in reply to Arthur's questions and expressions of uneasiness on her account, the good man simply

recommended change of air and scene. But Mrs. Armytage, in spite of all their representations, remained immovable from Holywell; and Arthur, who would have made any sacrifice, any exertion, for his sister, had it not in his power to afford her the desired restorative. He thought it hard, and it was hard, that, possessed of twelve thousand a year, he could not command the power of renovating the bloom of poor Sophia's cheeks or the cheerfulness of her smiles.

The lady of Holywell (if indeed blind to the necessities of the case) had some grounds to plead against the possibility of quitting home. Doncaster races were approaching; and Doncaster races confer the same sort of responsibility on all mansions within twenty miles distance, which a coronation entails on the houses in Palace Yard. For many months before, invitations and engagements are made, which then to shirk were then to be most base; and from time immemorial a noble spirit of hospitality had at such epochs opened the

gates, slaughtered the venison, and drained the claret binns of Holywell. Estranged from London and its splendours, that annual holiday seemed sufficiently to enliven the sober year of Mrs. Armytage.

During the week preceding the races, the gathering, in all the neighbourhood round, is as the swarming of a hundred hives; from east, west, north, and south, kinsfolk and friends turn their thoughts and their travelling carriages towards Doncaster. Houses are made to stretch for the occasion; accommodations otherwise noted unavailable become effective for a time; no room is too small, no bed too simple for a guest. "Come, and we will do our best for you; the house is quite full, but you will be better with us than at an inn," is a welcome sound to such stragglers as have not had the good fortune to be booked for an earlier invitation.

But even such an invitation as this, Arthur had it not in his power to afford. He was aware that, on the present occasion, his mother

expected the arrival of Sir John and Lady Maudsley, and their three daughters, prudently bent on proving to their wealthy kinswoman their magnanimity of temper, superior to resenting her daughter's rejection of their son. His father's distant relative, Lord Armytage, had long been in the habit of bringing his lady to pass an annual week at Holywell, on occasion of the races; and in addition to these two large detachments, several old friends of Mrs. Armytage, including General and Mr. Devereux, Sir Charles and Lady Chartley, and some distant cousins from the county of Notts, were positively engaged to be of the Holywell party.

Yet Arthur had good reason to be certain that, notwithstanding the serious repulse experienced by Jack Baltimore in his intrusion at Holywell, the Dyke Robseys were in full expectation of receiving an invitation from him for the races;—the Robseys, who had so generously bestowed on Marian the whole of her little fortune—who naturally

regarded themselves as the origin of her brilliant marriage; and whose wedding gifts had been the only ones tendered him at that inauspicious epoch. Every individual of their Pimento circle in Portland Place had no doubt observed to them, "Ah! you are going to the North this year,—to Scarborough, to Doncaster?—To meet your married niece of course? Holywell Park, I fancy, is in the neighbourhood of Doncaster?—How very pleasant! how very convenient!" Yet no invitation, or hint of invitation, had been despatched.

But affairs were now becoming desperate. The Robseys had actually quitted London, were actually spar-gathering at Matlock; and unless there were any hope of their being lost in Poole's Hole, or engulphed in the Eldin Mine, no chance of escape for Arthur! Their letters to Marian implied, that they should of course be asked to sleep a few nights at Holywell Park, yet Marian could just as readily have lodged them at Windsor Castle!

She would have far sooner entreated shelter for her uncle and aunt of the Duchess of Spalding, than of her awful mother-in-law.

At last, Arthur, conscious of the extremity of the case, took courage; not to address Mrs. Armytage on the subject—of the impossibility of such a measure he felt hourly more conscious; but to appeal to the Robseys themselves. He wrote, in short, in a tone of as much unconcern as he could assume, expressing his regret that, for many months past, his mother had formed such engagements as to debar him from the pleasure he should have had in offering them accommodations at Holywell; and to inform them that, unless they empowered him to take immediate precautions, they would not find a room or bed undisposed of in the neighbourhood. And such, he heartily hoped, might prove the case; still, it was his duty to apprize them of the hazard; while in softening phrase, he expressed his hopes that, at some *future* time, they would accompany him to the races from Holywell.

Not a word in reply!

At Arthur's suggestion, Marian wrote again, and nearly in the same terms, but with those more conciliatory explanations which flow spontaneously from a woman's pen. Still no answer! The kind-hearted niece, recalling to mind the physical infirmities of poor old little Jacob, began almost to fear that her good uncle might have over-exerted himself among the wonders of the Peak, and fallen a martyr to the picturesque; while Arthur had an uneasy apprehension that they were only affronted, and that it was among the possibilities of things, Jack Baltimore's ex-jockey friend Lightweight might have been induced to bestow upon them the hospitality so pitifully withheld at Holywell. And this would, indeed, be a consummation! Under what auspices for a Mrs. Arthur Armytage to present herself to the fastidious inquisition of Yorkshire! And what would he not have hazarded, rather than encounter such an ordeal?

Any thing, perhaps, but the indignation of his mother! To quit home on the eve of the races, when so extensive a family reunion was about to be collected under her roof, would be an offence far direr in its results than any he had hitherto perpetrated; — Arthur reluctantly submitted himself to an encounter with the tug of war.

CHAPTER II.

By our present mode of education we are forcibly warped from the bias of nature, until even our thinking faculty is diverted into an unnatural channel. We are changed into creatures of art and affectation; our perception is abused; our senses perverted; our minds lose their force and flavour—till the soul sinks into a kind of idiotism, and is diverted by toys and baubles, enlivened by a quick succession of trivial objects that glisten, glance, and dance before the eye—like an infant kept awake and inspirited by the sound of a rattle.

SMOLLETT.

ONE available resource remained for him against the contemplation of these impending ills, no less than of Sophia's pale and cheerless countenance—in that all-engrossing purpose of masculine existence—the sports of the field. It was September. The Holywell preserves were the best in that part of the country. No vacation synod of over-tasked ministers, or faction of a disbanded administration, gathered annually in the halls of Mrs. Armytage, to plan, project, cabal, outwit,—as

in those of the Duchess of Spalding, on pretence of *battues*, calculated to decimate her game, and form a screen to far wider devastations. She had what is called "excellent shooting" to bestow upon her friends and guests; but not a coney,—not so much as the range of a turnip-field,—to offer as a bait to those wandering dervises of the great world, who bestow their tediousness on country-houses, in proportion to the merits of the sport afforded, or the reputation of the cook provided and providing.

Still, there is something cheerless in solitary sports. To traverse a mountain moor where all is wild and strange, with no other society than the uninterpretable Highlander toiling after you in vain, may be an exciting thing; but to wander over the same "farmy fields," you have wandered over from childhood, with none but Dick Martindale the keeper to applaud your exploits, is, in the sequel, wearisome enough. Greta and his two friends still loitered in Perthshire; not

one of the Spalding family could Arthur presume to invite; the society of Wemmersley, their only sporting neighbour, was worse than none; and, unless he could have persuaded old Dr. Maranham to bear him company, Dick Martindale was fated to be the Patroclus of our Achilles.

But all this compulsive solitude was advantageous to him. Affording that leisure for reflection which had hitherto been wanting, it rendered him eager to loiter for an hour or two at the vicarage on his return towards Holywell, whenever Dr. Grant found respite from his pastoral and paternal duties to bestow his time on one whose enlightenment might tend at some future time to the enlightenment of the country.

There was something in the very presence of Dr. Grant, even when unengaged in bestowing spiritual exhortation or classical instruction, which exercised the happiest influence over the mind of Arthur. Arthur was discontented with his lot; accounted himself

a slave—a victim. Yet here was a man, immeasurably his superior in understanding, acquirements, virtue,—resigned to "shine humbly in his sphere and be content;"—desiring riches as a means of good to others, yet patient in poverty; conscious of power to enlighten the world, to distinguish himself as a preacher, to exalt himself as a reformer, yet satisfied to remain obscure, doing good after his generation; nay, more than satisfied—happy, and exulting in the opportunities afforded. Although constantly thwarted in his views by the opposition of Mrs. Armytage, he felt that few pastors would have exercised over her perverseness so much authority as himself; and that few pastors are fortunate in a patroness of so much moral excellence, or such well-motived liberality towards the poor. He thought of Spaldington, and its rich rector the dean, and its rich rector the dean's protectress, the duchess,—and gloried in his humble lot. He looked round upon his fair children—the memento of his wedded hap-

piness—and blessed the name of Mrs. Armytage; he looked upward to the bright sky, where his past labours and past affections were to be crowned, and blessed the name of the Almighty! And what spectacle more exalted, more instructive, than a man of lofty powers of mind and aspiring nature, subdued to philosophy by the influence of religion?

From the contemplation of such an example, Arthur often turned his steps more lightly towards Holywell, remembering that *he* had a living wife to love and cherish him, —a child born in the sunshine of prosperity— a position enabling him to achieve distinction, and contribute to the happiness and amelioration of his fellow-creatures; that *he* walked in no narrow circle of limitation, unless the circumscription of his own passions, his own frailties. Armed against himself by the lesson, he would mount his horse and ride cheerfully into Thornton, confront with firmness the insolence of its petty cabal, disconcert the manœuvres of Gumption and his

confraternity, confer with his friend the Mayor, consult the interests of the manufacturing population, acquaint himself with the necessities, the projects, of his constituents, and form views of his own for the reconcilement of their jarring claims. The counsels of the right-minded Lord Rotherham were also of material service to him; and if Marian sometimes suspected that he made them a pretext for too frequent visits to Greta Castle, she was now too uneasy on Sophy's account to indulge as formerly in the personal griefs of idle jealousy.

It was on the eve of the arrival of Lord and Lady Armytage, and Sir John Maudsley and his family were already established at Holywell preparatory to the races, that Wemmersley,—who had no other occupation than to prowl like a stray cat from house to house in the neighbourhood, to get up petty fights, execute petty depredations, and render himself a universal nuisance,—walked into the drawing-room at Holywell to inquire of Sir John

after his charming friend Mr. Reginald Maudsley (whom he knew to be sulking on a tour in Carniola), to inform Lady Maudsley that there were several cases of smallpox in the neighbourhood (which he knew to be convalescent), and to predict, for the gratification of the whole party, that they would certainly have rain for the races,—"Every fifth Doncaster being invariably rainy, and the last four having been fine as Midsummer."

"I was over at Doncaster yesterday," said he. "Not being so fortunate as my friend Mrs. Armytage in a double set of horses, the journey is more of an affair to us; and I always get a *pied-à-terre* for the benefit of our party."

"His friend, Mrs. Armytage," did not think it necessary to apprise him that her widely-extended connexion in the town and neighbourhood pre-assured her the use of half-a-dozen *pied-à-terres*, but suffered him to proceed with his malignations.

"I was glad to find that our races are likely

to be remarkably full, as well as remarkably good," said he; "though bored enough that not a room was to be had but a dark hole over a confectioner's, smelling of raspberry jam and queencakes, at the rate of three guineas a day. I ought, however, to have congratulated myself that it was no worse; for it seems we Yorkshire squires"—(Mrs. Armytage, with ruffled feathers, longed to remind him that he had been born in his father's villa at Hornsey)—"are to be brought out this year. Fate has brought down in judgment upon us a tribe of graminivorous nigger-drivers, enough to spread the yellow fever through the country. All the best rooms at the New Angel are engaged for a Mr. and Mrs. Dyke Robsey,—all the best stabling engaged for a Mr. and Mrs. Dyke Robsey,—the best places in the Stand for a Mr. and Mrs. Dyke Robsey;—and when I saw a fine lively turtle arrive by the mail, and tried to make interest at the Rockingham Arms for a few quarts for our party at Mill Hill,—not so much as a fin undisposed

of!—all belonging to Monsieur le Marquis de Carabas, this said Mr. Dyke Robsey."

"And who is Mr. Dyke Robsey?" inquired poor Lady Maudsley, a perpetual questioner about nothings,—a stereotyped note of interrogation.

"There is a little spare, dwarfed, priggish individual of that name in the House," replied Sir John; "member for Perjureham, if my memory serves me;" and out came the Peacock's Repository, which fulfilled to *his* needs all purposes of rhetoric or science, as containing an authentic list of baronets and members of parliament. "Exactly,—'Jacob Dyke Robsey, Portland Place, London (no country seat, apparently), member for Perjureham.' Ay,—I recollect him,—I used to sit near him, or I never should have heard the dozen words of speech, which regularly a dozen times in the course of the session he intended should have become audible to the House.—'Mister Speaker, I, who hold myself to be the unflinching champion of railroads and radical

reform,'—when cries of 'Question,' or a chorus of coughs, used invariably to deprive posterity of the peroration. Poor little fellow! he was pigmy enough to have been a grandee of Spain."

"Mr. Dyke Robsey is my very near relation," interrupted Mrs. Arthur Armytage; and, to Sophia's satisfaction, in a firmer voice, and with a calmer manner, than she had even expected to hear her sister-in-law assume on so trying an occasion.

"Ten thousand thousand pardons, my dear madam," cried Sir John, not sorry, perhaps, to have been the means of inflicting mortification indirectly on Mrs. Armytage, who, at various times, had been the means of inflicting so much and so directly on himself; "I was not at all aware,—I could not be expected to know. I really think it will be a vastly convenient thing when 'Burke's Commoners' shall be completed, like the Baronetage and Peerage, so as to make one better acquainted with alliances and intermarriages,

—at least in one's own family, and in a certain rank of life."

"Even as it is," replied Marian, to Sophia's still greater amazement, "circumstances might have made you aware of my connexion with Mr. Robsey; his wife and my mother being alike daughters of one of the earlier Irish Baronets, Sir Emilius O'Moran."

"But after all, *who* reads or cares for such things!" cried Wemmersley, provoked to see her extricate herself so well from the pit he had prepared for her. "It was only the other day that I heard Lord Rotherham's sister, Lady Cardington, coolly inquire of Di Maranham after her niece Miss Devonport!—'I have no niece, Madam; Miss Devonport is no relation of the family.'—'Pray excuse me,' drawled Lady Cardington, 'I always fancied than an elder sister of yours had married a Mr. Devonport, and died in the West Indies.'—'There is no occasion for any exercise of the *fancy* with regard to such a family as ours!' retorted Di. 'The Ba-

ronetage might have afforded your ladyship proof in point.'—'Ah! very true!' again drawled Lady Cardington; 'I *have* a Baronetage and Peerage for the use of my porter, in Grosvenor Square; but, to say the truth, I never opened one in my life.'"

Wemmersley's mimicry of the short, crabbed voice of the Yorkshire 'squiress, and the silver drawl of the dowager of May Fair, was to the life; yet nobody laughed. The Maudsleys were affronted, and Mrs. Armytage, angry. "I had not supposed," said she, "that my friend Lord Rotherham could have so ridiculous a sister."

"And did you learn at Doncaster, Mr. Wemmersley," inquired poor Sophia, in her now hollow voice, "*whether* the races were likely to be brilliantly attended this year?"

"Oh! you know there is always prodigious exaggeration of the strength of forces, on the eve of a battle. But we *shall* have, of course, our usual allowance of county notabilities,—the Duke, and the Wentworth family, with their

thirty (how many is it?) outriders a-piece. The Duke of Wetherby, too, comes in state, and, to Lady Honoria's surprise, in a state of single-blessedness; while the Spaldings will have a suite of twenty carriages, including those of my excellent relative, Mr. Leonidas Lomax, whom report asserts to be on the eve of marriage with the Duke of Spalding's niece."

"*That* you must consider a match of your own making, Mr. Wemmersley," observed Mr. Arthur; "since *you* were the means of introducing him to the family."

"Yes; but I had then a higher opinion of the family than to suppose they would condescend to barter a twig of their genealogical tree against even a million of dollars, amassed by drysalting and treacle-boiling!" cried Wemmersley, with all the indiscretion of rage. "I have had enough of them! Last week that Frenchified jackanapes, Lord Wyndham, wrote me coolly word, 'Dear Sir,'—he was coming over to sleep at Mill-Hill; and I,

still more coolly, wrote back word that my house was full."

"You should never have allowed them to take such liberties with you," said Marian, to whom this latter piece of information had been significantly addressed by Wemmersley; "the Duke of Spalding himself would not have presumed so far at Holywell."

"But to return to the races, Miss Armytage," resumed Wemmersley, to cover his disconcertment—"We are to have at Greta Castle, as usual, a vast gathering of the Partlet family,—all Lord Rotherham's married sisters, and all Lady Rotherham's married brothers, and all the sons and daughters of all the tribe; besides the party of young Moormen, who will arrive this evening from Glenvaclach. But the best set, as usual, will be at Sir Edward Longbond's."

"And who is Sir Edward Longbond?" inquired old Maudsley, smelling a baronet.

"No one we should have ever heard of,"

replied Wemmersley, "if he had not happened to purchase that remarkably pretty place, with the fine plantations, close to Doncaster race-course. But by managing to turn its eligibilities to account, he has provided splendidly for his whole family. George Robins, when he advertised the estate, instead of describing the substantial mansion, fine sheets of water, pineries, and ice-houses, 'the whole contiguous to the far-famed race-course of Doncaster, and commanding a view of the Stand,' ought to have defined it as 'a pair of colours in the Guards, a stall at Winchester, an attaché-ship at Munich, all lying in a ring-fence within view of the St. Leger.'"

"I have not the honour of understanding you, Sir," said Sir John; who, regarding Wemmersley's volubility as unparliamentary and plebeian, chose to make him rise to explain.

"I mean," cried Wemmersley, very much elated by his own wit, "that Sir Edward, by contriving to make his house available for the

races year after year, to my lord the First Lord of the Treasury, my lords of the Home and Foreign Departments, with other cabinet et-cetera (being unquestionably the most convenient for the purpose of any in the neighbourhood), has provided for half-a-dozen younger sons. For the hundred or so per annum he expends on his race parties, the revenue finds compound interest to the amount of between three and four thousand a year."

"Not altogether a liberal calculation," said Sir John, jealous of the honour of a Sir Edward: "in all probability his family interest and connexions—"

"Pardon me," interrupted Wemmersley; "you lie under a very natural mistake. But the object of your vindication is not so much as a baronet by descent. He is indebted even for that small distinction to Maplewood Lodge. He arrived in Yorkshire, Edward Longbond, Esq., and (I grieve to mention it) from some retired-solicitor or small-mercantile neighbourhood,—such as Welbeck Street or

Devonshire Place,—and rose to Sir Edward-ship and a deputy lieutenancy in the course of the first three Doncasters."

"You ought to add," said Mrs. Armytage, with dignity, "that Sir Edward Longbond has not attained, nor ever will, any permanent footing in the society of Yorkshire."

"I do not imagine that he ever sought it," said Wemmersley, rising to take leave. "He prudently invested his civilities, as he had been investing his Bank stock, where they were likely to return him the highest rate of interest. The smallest Under Secretary of State was worth more to Longbond than the highest Yorkshire high-mightiness. Good morning, my dear Madam; Lady Maudsley, your most obedient;" and, with a comprehensive bow to the younger ladies, away went Wemmersley, delighted to have inflicted pin's-point wounds on the pride of every person present."

But there was one to whom, while meaning to give pain, he had imparted unlimited plea-

sure. Marian, who for a week past had been trembling lest she was fated to forego the long-promised pleasures of her Scarborough excursion, and even seriously apprehensive that some mischief had befallen some member of her family, was now wrapt up in measureless content. The Robseys, in whom she could see nothing to be ashamed of,—nothing but what was honourable and gratifying as a family connexion, were actually coming. Instead of fretting over the inhospitality of Holywell, they had secured the best accommodations,—had outbid princes, archbishops, and peers of the realm,—and established themselves, to their entire satisfaction, unhurt by the contumely of a Mrs. Armytage. Her father, she had long known, would certainly accompany his friend Tom Warley, who had a permanent lodging in the town. But now the whole family was secured to her. Who knows,—perhaps even her dear, good mother would be of the party? Her eyes sparkled,—her colour rose. Self-absorbed, she heard not even Lady

Maudsley's polite inquiries after the teething of her baby. She heard no arrival, no announcement of visitors; nay, was obliged to be addressed twice by Mrs. Armytage ere she turned to execute her formal introduction-curtsey to Lord and Lady Armytage,—personages whom, as distant connexions of her late husband, the lady of Holywell always treated with deference; but to whom, as in noble and aristocratic connexions, her own superiors in condition, she did not fail to temper her civilities with formality and hauteur. Her reception of two of the easiest and best-natured people in England was as measured and ceremonious as that of some plenipo. of the Landgrave of Saxe Kleinigstein doing the honours of his saloon to the resident of the Duke of Hesse-Rothenburg-Fisigbuttel.

CHAPTER III.

She dressed herself in silk attire,
Her merry men all in green;
And in every borough that she rode through,
They took her to be some queen.

Old Ballad.

Arthur returned in the highest spirits that day from shooting. He had been lucky in his sport; had seen Wemmersley at a distance, and rejoiced in having escaped his visit; and experienced all the elation, natural at his age, in the prospect of a pleasant party, to join the brilliant county-meeting of the morrow. For Yorkshire is an especially patriotic shire; "steeped to saturation," as Lord Wyndham Spalding was apt to observe, "in that most narrow-spirited of all spirits—*l'esprit de province.*"

But when Marian rushed into his dressing-room to meet him, radiant with smiles,—smiles

not unmoistened by tears of joy,—to say that "They were *all* coming! certainly coming! her uncle and aunt; her dear papa, and, perhaps, all the rest of the family!" the mercury ebbed in the tube, and Arthur's spirit became depressed to zero.

To do him justice, it was not now of his mother he was afraid, but of *them*. Offended, as they doubtless were, by the gracelessness so little originating with himself, how should he avoid the explosion of family wrath, which could not occur more inopportunely than in a race-stand, or county ball-room? He knew both Jack Baltimore and his sister-in-law to be wholly unsubmitted to the conventionalisms of society; the one from despising, the other from misapprehending them. He was satisfied that they would enlarge long and loudly on their chapter of grievances, at some uncomfortable moment, to gall the tender pride of his mother, excite the lofty sneers of the Maudsleys, or, still worse, provoke against himself the ill-opinion of his more rational

relative, Lord Armytage; a man with whom he was proud to keep up that good-will of distant kinsmanship, which exists between the wealthy 'squire, ambitious to be no more than esquire, and the noble lord, who would be sorry to exchange his coronet for the finest of estates. Lord Armytage had been long in office, and Arthur, the son of his cousin Arthur, had asked no favour of him: the Holywell interest returned a member to parliament, and the minister had never sought to gain his vote. There was self-respect, and consequently, mutual respect between the families.

And now there was every probability that his Right Honourable cousin would hear him upbraided by a jockey-looking man, of port-and-porter complexion, with the mean insolence of pride; or his pretty little wife reproached, by a gorgeous virago, with benefits received and benefits forgot! How disparagingly would Lord and Lady Armytage thenceforward think of them, for having proved un-

grateful to obscure relations, too undistinguished to become invited guests at Holywell!

"My dear Marian," cried Arthur, in despair, "have you set your heart on going to-morrow to the races? They are never more than moderately good the first day;—my mother seldom goes the first day,—only this year, the Maudsleys and Devereuxes seem inclined to make the utmost of an opportunity of amusing themselves, and she is under the necessity of obliging them."

"Indeed *I have*," replied Marian, somewhat startled; "you I know I am quite indifferent to the goodness of the races. *I* should not know Eclipse from Plenipo; and as to the company, whether there are three dukes and six, (I mean ducal carriages,) or only one, or even none, what difference can it make to me? But remember, dearest, I have not seen papa these sixteen months; no! not since our wedding-day; and now I am certain of aunt and uncle Robsey's coming,—I—"

Arthur groaned. "But surely one day

makes no great difference, after the sixteen months' absence?" said he; "and if you could persuade yourself to remain at home to-morrow with poor Sophy, (who, I fear, would find her three following days of perfect solitude more oppressive than she anticipates,) you would enjoy yourself doubly on the following day, from the thought of having done a kind action by my sister."

"Indeed I should!" cried Marian, with unsuspecting frankness, little dreaming that her husband, conscious of her guilelessness—her total want of tact—was intent only on assuming to himself exclusively the management of the first interview with her family; "and if Sophia will accept my company (which I almost doubt, for she is now so fond of being alone), I will most willingly stay with her. I am ashamed to say, I never thought of it! But as dear Sophy makes so little of her own indisposition, and seems so unwilling to have it noticed before Mrs. Armytage, I shall mention nothing about my intentions till to-mor-

row, as they are all setting off. It is settled, I believe, that your mother takes in *her* carriage Lady Armytage, Lady Maudsley, and Mrs. Devereux; Lady Chartley and two of the Maudsley girls were to go with *me* in the barouche; *you* can supply my place. For form's sake, there must be some member of the family with them."

Arthur, who was to have accompanied Lord Armytage and Sir Charles Chartley in the britschka of the former, at an earlier hour, scarcely relished the idea of relinquishing a pleasant party, for a place in the grand family procession; but after Marian's generous self abnegation,—how to raise objections? He could only accede, thank her cordially for her compliance, and tell her—and honestly and sincerely—that never had he seen her look so pretty. Flattery, or it might be approbation, from Arthur naturally increased her bloom and brilliancy, so that when she entered the room before dinner, where the large Holywell party was assembled, Mrs. Armytage's guests

were unanimously of opinion; that if her son had not done justice to his pedigree in his choice of a wife, he had ample excuse in the personal charms and gentle modest demeanour of Mrs. Arthur Armytage.

And, thus re-assured in his apprehensions for the following day, the dinner went off pleasantly enough to Arthur. On state occasions like the present, he made it a point to cede his usual post at table to Dr. Grant, who occupied a sort of chaplain's post in the family, and never did his mother appear to such advantage as when presiding over the pomp of such an entertainment; proud of her well-ordered hospitality, her well-selected society, yet never suffering the magnificence of her gilt plate or the cares of the buffet to interfere with her share in conversation. Eminently well informed on all topics which interest the abler class of country gentlemen, Mrs. Armytage could argue with Lord Armytage, — with Chartley, Devereux, or Maudsley, on points which their own wives seldom heard mentioned

without a yawn,—and was familiar with the leading political periodicals and pamphlets of the day, and indebted to Dr. Grant for a clearer insight into the views of each; she knew all, in short, which an extensive landed proprietor ought to know; and displayed her knowledge, not for the sake of display, but for the promotion of conversation. Arthur, who had only recently devoted *his* attention to such studies, felt that her views were clearer, her judgment more accurately based than his own; and was naturally proud of the respect paid to her opinion by every man present,—three of whom were senators, and one *more* than a senator—an enlightened and upright divine.

The following day, in spite of the predictions of Wemmersley, whose predictions had been *mere* spite, glowed with a fine autumnal sunshine; and the substantially furnished breakfast-table was surrounded by cheerful faces and contented guests. Race-cards were handed from one to another; the odds

discussed; the names of "Marcellina" and "Tombsy" had honourable mention; a guinea raffle was made up for the ladies, and the youngest Miss Maudsley declared herself enchanted to have drawn "Rhodacantha," because "it was such a very pretty name." Even the prospect of the sixteen miles before them, alarmed no one. The road was a noble one,—the post-horses excellent. Those of Mrs. Armytage were in waiting some four miles from Doncaster; and the worthy family whose house in the town was annually placed at her disposal, not only entertained them all at dinner, but provided beds for such of the party as were unable, or unwilling, to return to Holywell at night. Nothing could be better arranged.

Yet Marian listened to their mutual gratulations with a cheerful countenance. She was above all things anxious that Arthur should entertain no suspicion of her feelings of disappointment, to embitter his pleasures of the day. Sophia, unable now to quit her room

for breakfast, knew nothing of plans with which she would certainly have interfered; and when Mrs. Armytage and her detachment had driven from the door, her daughter-in-law pleaded a graceful apology to Lady Chartley and the Miss Maudsleys, her sisters. Arthur took her place in the barouche: and, with a smiling lip but tearful eyes, Marian stood watching from the breakfast-room window the gradual dispersion of the dust raised by the progress of the cavalcade through the park.

Scarcely, however, had the last brown shade vanished among the intermingling verdure of elms and oaks, when she was singing in her nursery, and giving orders for the preparations she was now sure would be necessary for her trip to Scarborough; promising her little unconscious, round-eyed baby, how loved and how caressed it should be; and content to think that Arthur had her notes to Papa and Aunt Robsey safe in his pocket; that he would soon be shaking hands with one, and shaken hands with by the other! By noon, too, she had

established herself in Sophia's dressing-room, with her work-box and her book; prepared to talk or be silent, as the invalid might require. But there was only one point on which Miss Armytage felt just then desirous of conversation;—to know who had practised on the easy nature of Marian, so far as to dissuade her from going to the races, concerning which, the preceding day, she had indulged in such rapturous anticipations; and this Sophia had not courage to ask. Sophia strongly suspected that her sister-in-law had been unfairly dealt with.

For her own part she would have willingly dispensed with Marian's company. Amply as Sophia rendered justice to her merits, and dearly, in fact, as she loved her, Marian was not in her confidence. Miss Armytage was aware that to confide to her was to confide to Arthur,—the last person she desired to acquaint with the real origin of her illness. Dr. Grant was her only friend and comforter; for although, from the day on which he had tenderly and cautiously showed her an announcement in the

newspapers, of "Mr. and Mrs. Edgar Rainsford's departure from London on a bridal tour to Italy," the name had never been mentioned between them; he knew all that was passing in her mind, and, thus informed, avoided all inquiries and all subjects capable of giving her pain. He believed her, and with justice, to be too good, too delicate, to dwell upon reminiscences of the attachment of a man by whom she had been forsaken for another; but he also feared that the shaft thus resolutely drawn forth from her bosom, had left an agonizing, if not a fatal wound behind.

To assuage these sufferings by the soothing power of religion,—the strengthening power of reason,—was his earnest care. So often as he could seek her society without attracting the notice of Mrs. Armytage, the good pastor was by her side, reminding her of her responsibility for the many good and glorious gifts bestowed upon her, exhorting her to be well, to be cheerful, to be happy. And Sophia, to her utmost, obeyed his injunctions; she was often cheerful,

never well. "My dear Doctor," she would say, in answer to his reprehensions, "I am doing my best, believe me, I am doing my best. But we hear of the difficulty which people who ascend mountains are said to experience in breathing; just so, I find it difficult to live. The moral air I breathe is too cold and insufficient for my existence."

Assured that her venerable friend would devote part of every race day to her society, Miss Armytage had hoped to be alone with him. She had so many doubts to solve, so many apprehensions to relieve, so many spots of darkness to remove, such as suddenly appear among the shadows of a closing day, or closing existence. To the children of this world, she felt it irrelevant to talk of such things; to the father of a flock, she might unburthen all her misgivings! But between two perfectly ingenuous persons, explanations are not difficult; and when the good pastor of Holywell made his appearance, she had only to say "Dear Marian, I wish to have some conversation with

Dr. Grant," to be left to the discussions she desired.

Meanwhile, thoughtless of the sick, and careless of the sorry, the gay cavalcade made its way through a succession of cheerful villages, at the wicket gates of whose white cottages many an humble curtsey was dropped to the "grand coaches of Madam Armytage;" while the labourer uncovered his head as he recognized the Holywell liveries, and the urchins dabbling in the pool sent up a shout in her honour. At length they reached the spot where two fine sets of horses, held by the Holywell outriders, awaited the two first carriages, and fresh posters the remainder; and, proud of her well-appointed equipage and well-selected party, Mrs. Armytage prepared to make her triumphal entry upon the race-course; conscious that she exhibited neither horse nor menial more or less than her father the Squire had done before her,—that there was no vulgar competition with the Duke of this, or Earl of that,—that she was only doing becoming honour to Yorkshire, to Doncaster, and to Holywell.

But if Mr. Wemmersley awaited in his new barouche, with hatred and malevolence, the coming of the party, there was *one* person on the course watching with eager and affectionate anxiety for a glimpse of the well-known liveries of green and gold; a man with a heavy book, the responsibilities of which, on settling day, would probably leave him in difficulties for the remainder of the year; a man whose sleeve was plucked for counsel by many a turf-bitten lord; whose bets were noted and backed by many a worthy in rusty buckskins, mahogany-topped boots, and a frock of well-worn camlet; and who, amid all his temporary importance, all his permanent distresses, felt himself sufficiently compensated for a twelve-months' estrangement from his child, by the happy prospects of the moment. The expectation of seeing his pretty Marian take her place among the Yorkshire highflyers, with such appurtenances and means to boot, such cattle, such a coachman in such a wig (none of the London chaps know how to wear a wig!), and of finding her joyous and affectionate as

ever, was almost too much of happiness for Jack Baltimore!

The moment he descried the party, Jack touched the sides of the incomparable pony-he bestrode,—a pony which Landseer might have delighted to paint, or Lady Dacre to model, —and trotted off to the first carriage, where waved the feathers of the Ladies Armytage and Maudsley, and gleamed the sober, white satin bonnet of Mrs. Armytage. But no Marian; the fourth lady was a very pretty Mrs. Devereux, but not the pretty one he wanted. He passed on to the second carriage, where Lady Chartley and her sisters cast admiring glances on his knowing pony, although he had no admiring glances to bestow in return, for Marian was not there. The other carriages of the suite were empty; the gentlemen of the party having already mounted their horses to ride to the stand.

"Pray can you inform me, my hearty, where I am likely to find Mrs. Arthur Armytage," cried Jack, to a servant who was lounging

behind the britschka of Lord Armytage. But his "hearty," who was booking a bet he had just made with Sir Charles Chartley's valet, turned a deaf ear to the inquiry.

"I say, where the devil is Mrs. Arthur Armytage?" cried Jack in a louder key, roughly detaining a man in the Holywell livery, who was climbing to the box of the barouche.

"In oan or t'oother them carriages, Ize naw shure," exclaimed canny Yorkshire, certain that he had assisted in the embarkation of eight female passengers in the two; but conceiving little difference between a lady in a blue gown and a lady in a lilac pelisse.

Jack looked again, and began to swear, believing that the man was trying "to sell him a bargain." "And where the devil then is your master?" persisted he. But Yorkshire was sulky and would not answer; and it was the post-boy, who, in deference to the clever bit of a thing on which the "obstropolous gemman" was mounted, condescended to reply that "Mr.

Harmitage was off to the stond with my Lord and t'other gemman."

"My Lord and t'other gentleman," retorted Jack with bitterness, as he trotted off at speed. "Lords enough, no doubt; let alone the gentlemen. But where's his wife? where's my girl?"

Intimately versed in the localities of that field of forty thousand footsteps, Jack soon reached the spot where Arthur and his friends stood awaiting the slow arrival of the Holywell carriages; a group such as may be seen on all race courses; looking with eager eyes, speaking with eager voices, listening with eager ears: all talking at once,—all half-angry, and whole-disputatious;—affording proof in point, that scarcely a modern Englishman but is born with the instincts of a horse-jockey.

"Armytage!—Arthur Armytage!" hallooed the uncompromising voice of Jack; and "Ha!—Baltimore!—how are you?" brought the father and son-in-law quickly together, for the

iteration of Jack's often-repeated inquiry — "Where the devil is Marian?"

"She sends you a thousand kind remembrances, and this note," said Arthur, feeling in his pocket for the letter, which he had of course treated with the respect paid by all husbands to all notes consigned to them by their wives, by leaving it at home on his dressing-table.—"God bless my soul!—I must have lost the letter on the road," cried he, groping again, and again groping in vain; "or my pocket has been picked on the Course."

"Is my daughter *ill*, that she is not with your party?"—faltered Jack. "She promised to meet me here."

"Quite well,—perfectly well,—and longing to see you," answered Arthur, growing embarrassed.—"But my sister is in a very delicate state of health, and Marian, with her usual good nature, offered to stay at home with her this morning."

"Her usual good nature—when her own

father, whom she has not seen these sixteen months, was waiting to give her the meeting?" cried Jack, with a heightened complexion. "This is not like Marian,—this is none of Marian's doing,—and, by God, I'll learn the rights of it!"

"My dear Baltimore, pray moderate your feelings," cried Arthur, dismounting, and trying to lead aside the spirited pony, and no less spirited rider. "You will have an opportunity of learning all you wish to know, of Marian herself, to-morrow."

"I tell you what, Arthur Armytage," cried Jack, still in a tremulously audible voice, "'tis now near on a year and a half since we gave you our girl, and not one of her family have set eyes on her since. You, for your own part, have treated us coolly enough; and as to your Jezebel of a mother, if it had not been for the protecting petticoats which belied her sex, when she insulted me over yonder at Holywell—by Jove, I——"

"While you speak in such terms of my

mother, you must excuse my continuing the conversation," said Arthur, with firmness.

"Nay! you know well enough 'tis I who am the injured party," cried Jack; "and, by George, now you are here, you shall hear me out!"

"Baltimore! Jack — Jack Baltimore!" shouted a voice from the crowd; "Lord Sweepstakes wants to know if you take six to four on Touchstone?"

"D—n Touchstone!" cried the angry father; and one or two knowing-looking fellows, well knowing the knowing Jack Baltimore, and surmising that nothing could have so fired his blood but a disputed bet, drew near to listen, in hopes of a quarrel.

"And I tell you once for all," resumed Jack,—to whose sympathies, at that moment, all Tattersall's might have appealed in vain,—"that sooner than see my child brow-beat or ill-used among you, I will claim her for my own, and carry her home again, if there be law in the land to see her righted."

Arthur, greatly incensed by these harsh inferences, was about to make an angry answer; but Lord Armytage, who had overheard enough to understand exactly what was going on, advanced, touched his hat politely to Jack, and slightly introduced himself. "I fear you have forgotten me, Mr. Baltimore?—Lord Armytage,—I have had the pleasure of meeting you at our friend the Duke of C.'s. Allow me to assure you that I left my young relative, your daughter, at the breakfast-table this morning, in perfect health and spirits; anxious only that Mrs. Armytage should not discover her intention of absenting herself from the races, and require her to give up her amiable intention of bearing poor Miss Armytage company through the day."

"And pray, my lord, what is Mrs. Armytage doing here herself, if her daughter is so ill?" inquired Jack, somewhat pacified by the mild demeanour of Lord Armytage. "And why could nobody but Marian stay at home with Miss Sophia?"

"You must ask Miss Sophia why she prefers the society of her sister-in-law to that of any other person," rejoined his companion, giving the most gallant turn to the matter. "Mrs. Armytage is here, in order not to disappoint a very large party, collected by a long-standing engagement. But to-morrow, no doubt, your daughter will explain these things better than I can presume to do. I must refer you to your daughter."

"*To-morrow!*—you are *quite* sure, then, she is coming to-morrow?" resumed Jack more mildly, addressing Arthur Armytage.

"I see no reason, Sir, that you should doubt my word," replied the young man, growing angry as the other became tranquillised. "Marian's note would have explained all; but, as I told you at first, I have unluckily lost it."

"By George, I've half a mind to push over to Holywell this very morning!" cried Jack, musing over the opportunity afforded by the absence of Mrs. Armytage, and the vast capabilities of his pony.

"Better not do that, my dear Sir," said Lord Armytage good-naturedly. "You will lose the races, gain only twenty-four hours in seeing your daughter, and deprive Miss Armytage of the promised comfort of her society. Better not do that! Besides, as my friend Arthur has shown himself so careless a note-bearer, I offer *myself* as *your* messenger, to convey anything you may wish to say to his wife."

"Tell her, then, from me, that I will never forgive her, if, on any pretence, she disappoints me again to-morrow," said Jack;—"and many thanks, my lord, for the trouble."

And though still bewildered in his operations by vexation at Marian's absence, and his ire against Mrs. Armytage and all her tribe, Jack now became gradually sensible to the excitement of such queries as "Who rides *General Chassé* to-morrow?"—"Has any one seen Chifney this morning?"—"Is Ridsdale come?"—"Two to four on *Goldbeater*!"—"*Marcellina* against the field;"—and rode off

on catching a distant glimpse of Tom Warley and Lightweight;—the former wiping his forehead with a Belcher handkerchief, the latter with his mouth full of ham-sandwiches, both talking, all the time, familiarly of Graftons, Clevelands, Fitzwilliams, Foleys, and Exeters, "as maids of thirteen do of puppy dogs!"

Meanwhile, all Yorkshire had assembled, and Wentworths and Howards,—Dunegulbes and Lascelleses,—Vernons and Dundases,—Ramsdens, Fawkeses, and Sykeses, are beginning to grace the benches. "Grove nods at Grove, each Castle has its brother;" Park curtsied majestically to Lodge,—Lodge to Deanery,—Deanery to Rectory;—while East Riding offers its civilities to West, and West acknowledges the greeting of North. The busy murmurs of a thousand voices rise; the gay dyes of a thousand brilliant colours expand; every body is glad, every body is gay; and, excepting one pale young lady, whose new dress from town has been sent down too tight in the waist, and in whose behalf salts and aromatic

vinegar are called for, all goes well. The horses are said to be saddling, the jockeys weighing, and the course is heard to be cleared. "They are off,—they have reached the red house—here they come, there they go! the blue, the orange, the pink, the pink, the orange—the orange, the orange!—"Tomboy has won by a length and a half." "Lord A. loses four thousand: Poor Lady A.!" "Lord B. wins five: My dear Lady B., I wish you joy!"—And in the course of a few short minutes, hundreds of thousands have changed masters!

But what is the matter with Mrs. Armytage?

CHAPTER IV.

At length burst in the argent revelry,
With plume, tiara, and all rich array;
Numerous as shadows, haunting fairily
The brain, new-stuff'd in youth with triumphs gay
Of old romance.—These let us wish away,
And turn, sole-thoughted, to one lady there.

KEATS.

To whom can possibly belong the rotund figure and laughter-loving face which court the notice of the lady of Holywell, by so familiar a series of nods and becks and wreathed smiles; leaning across Lady Armytage, and whisking the tail of a bird of Paradise into the eye of Lady Chartley?

She knows not, or does not choose to know. But the stranger will not be ignored out of countenance. Rising and pushing between the benches of the stand, she exclaims, "Mrs. Armytage, senior, I believe? Between families, no need of introduction; and I am really

most anxious, Ma'am, to learn if any accident is the cause of my not seeing my niece, young Mrs. Armytage, here this morning? I expected her to come and settle with me about our trip to Scarborough."

"No *accident*, no *cause*, indeed, that I am aware of, except her own caprices," was the haughty reply. "But I beg to refer you, Madam, to Mr. Arthur Armytage, who (having perhaps the honour of your acquaintance) may be inclined to favour you to-morrow with particulars at present unknown to myself." And, turning abruptly away, Mrs. Armytage began conversing in a low voice with her cousin Lady Chartley.

"The honour of my acquaintance, Ma'am?" retorted her astonished assailant. "Ha'vn't I explained to you, then, that I am your son's aunt-in-law, Mrs. Dyke Robsey, of Portland Place? You don't appear to understand me!"

"Pardon me, I should rather imagine that you do not understand me. I leave it to my

son and daughter to make their own arrangements, and form or cultivate their own connexions; requesting only the option of selecting mine." And again she turned to Lady Chartley, who was biting her very rosy lips, in order to keep her very silly countenance.

"Well, if I ever!" exclaimed Mrs. Dyke, as she bustled back to her seat to recount her discomfiture to a pretty-looking woman, a neighbour of Tom Warley's, and her companion for the day. "If Arthur Armytage don't insist upon her making me an apology, he never darkens my doors again! I've heard of the pride of Lucifer: commend *me* to the pride of Mrs. Armytage!"

But if Mrs. Armytage had succeeded in making the stranger uncomfortable, her own morning's amusement was not forwarded by the encounter. She had sense enough to perceive that, though Lady Chartley might be amused, Lady Armytage was shocked by all she had overseen and overheard; and above all, the allusion to Marian's visit to Scar-

borough provoked her beyond measure. Although she judged it unnecessary to communicate the circumstance to her family, it had long been Mrs. Armytage's intention to comply with Dr. Grant's advice respecting Sophia, so far as to remove from Holywell to the seaside for the month of October. Scarborough, the Brighton of her native county, was her natural resource; nor did she from long prejudice admit that any other breezes could be equally salubrious,—any other sea-bathing equally invigorating. She had already, indeed, secretly engaged a house there for the remainder of the autumn; but, having learnt from Wemmersley's recent visit a similar intention on the part of the Duchess of Spalding, and now from Mrs. Dyke Robsey the plans of her daughter-in-law, she felt that her patience would be insufficient against the thousand annoyances thus presented to her apprehensions. To see and hear the name of Armytage in hourly connexion with acts and excesses of vulgarity and folly, was an ordeal she dared

not encounter. Rather than attempt it, she would write at once, and give up the house; she would alter all her undivulged plans.

It was in vain, therefore, that *Birdlime* bolted or *Belshazzar* required the whip; Mrs. Armytage cared no more for their feats than for the donkey races at Holywell Cross. It was in vain that Lady Maudsley annoyed her by asking an introduction to the Duchess of Spalding, or Lady Chartley by expressing her audible admiration of Mrs. Wemmersley's most Maradanic hat. The thoughts of Mrs. Armytage were vibrating between Bridlington Quay,—Hastings,—Nice,—Naples. At that moment she felt that she could renounce even her beloved Holywell for ever, to escape the effronteries of a Mrs. Robsey. All Yorkshire bowed to her,—all Yorkshire curtsied,—all Yorkshire congratulated her that the races and the weather had turned out so well; for Mrs. Armytage was regarded as part and parcel of the shire,—Holywellized into a grand dignitary of the riding.

Fortunately, she had already decided to return home early in the evening with Lord and Lady Armytage, Sir John and Lady Mawbsley; leaving Lady Chartley and Mrs. Devereux to play the chaperon to those younger branches of the party, who saw in a good band, ball-room, and abundance of partners, the sufficient elements of an excellent ball; reserving herself for the more select one of the following night, but renouncing the St. Leger of the following morning. She could not hope to recover her equanimity sufficiently to peril a new encounter with Mrs. Dyke Robsey. Already, too, she meditated to punish Marian for her contumacy, by placing some obstacle in the way of even *her* progress to Doncaster, earlier than the morrow evening. But Lord Armytage, who had now obtained some insight into their family politics, had been struck by the vehemence of the warm-hearted Jack Baltimore's complaints, and kindly proposed driving over Marian in his phaeton to rejoin her husband, who had remained with the ball-

party in town; leaving his lady and Mrs. Armytage to make their appearance after dinner. Mrs. Arthur thanked him with all her heart; and in the course of their drive exhibited enough of her artless and affectionate nature to render him warmly her friend. For worlds he would not have lost the spectacle of her first meeting with her father.

Arthur, too, had, during his present visit to Holywell, made a highly-favourable impression on Lord Armytage. Having hitherto estimated him as a good-humoured, school-boyish young man, trammelled in his mother's apron-strings,—an officer of the guards, but no soldier,—a member of parliament, but no representative of the people,—and, perhaps, a little piqued at Arthur's neglect and want of kinsmanly deference during the preceding spring in town, he was surprised and pleased to find him well informed on all subjects of public interest connected with his neighbourhood; discreet, honourably intentioned, and

animated by the best instincts of a sober patriotism. Lord Armytage began to hope that he might become not only an honour to the family, but to the country; and resolved to sound his political views, as well as his inclinations for a life of public service. He saw no occasion that his young relative should remain in a state of dependence during the remaining lifetime of Mrs. Armytage.

That august lady, meanwhile, "clad in her robes of high habitual state," now commenced her progress towards the Doncaster ball; by no means impatient, either of the length of the road, or the twaddle of her companions: that road being a Macadamized perfection of her beloved West Riding, and that twaddle (emanating from a Lady Maudsley and a Lady Armytage) being neither of new novels nor new fashions, after the abominations of the Spaldingites, but of Sunday-schools and Dorcas societies, the falling off of Welsh flannel, and the coming on of caoutchouc clogs. They were all wending their way to

the ball as to an annual duty, a meeting of the Eboracensian parliament. There was no superfluous excitement in the feelings of the party: if they hoped anything, it was that they might get away early—if they feared anything, it was that they might take cold.

From the noble stewards of the ball, Lords Greta and Downham, Mrs. Armytage was secure of a distinguished reception; and it was her good fortune to encounter, immediately on entering the room, her friend Lord Rotherham, who, during his wife's convalescence, was under the necessity of making his appearance. On his arm, therefore, preceding Sir John Maudsley and her two dowagerly companions, she sailed majestically along the room to the place reserved for her. But although prepared for a disagreeable rencounter with Marian's relatives, she had not expected that the malice of the Fates, or of the Duchess of Spalding, would place Mrs. Dyke Robsey immediately next to herself. Yet *there* she was, covered with all the dia-

monds with which the united art of jewellers, mantua-makers, or millinors could contrive to adorn her person; and, thanks to that art having been exercised by the best in the metropolis, making by no means an objectionable figure. Her dress of rich violet brocade, and turban of palest gold, might have done credit even to the taste of a Mrs. Armytage.

"I have just been presented to Arthur's connexion, Mrs. Robsey," observed Lord Rotherham, as they advanced towards the sofa where the lady was seated.

"Have you? Yes! I might have concluded that my son and his wife would intrude those people on the acquaintance of all my friends."

"I beg your pardon; I have not spoken to either your son or daughter this evening. Lord Armytage was my master of the ceremonies."

"Lord Armytage? Arthur has placed them, then, under *his* protection?"

"By no means. I fancy Lord Armytage

became officially acquainted with Mr. Robsey. Armytage!" touching his Lordship on the shoulder, "where and how did you know the Robsey family?"

"Arrived at last!—my dear Madam!" exclaimed Lord A., now first noticing the Holywell party; "we were beginning to get uneasy about you. Excellent running this morning; never saw a better St. Ledger;—very pleasant dinner party; and now, I think we are going to have a capital ball. The Robseys, did you say? how did I know the Robseys?—By virtue of office. Mr Dyke Robsey is at once one of the largest West India proprietors, and the most liberal; almost the only one with whom I experienced no trouble in the abolition business: I have the highest respect for him. Whatever objections were started by his brother-slaveholders, Robsey had but one argument against them:—'The Whigs have given us railroads and Radical reform; I consider them entitled to my vote and interest, on a question of their own!' Yet it

was a question by which he lost four thousand a-year."

"My dear father, pray allow me to present Mr. Dyke Robsey to you," said Lord Greta, suddenly arresting Lord Rotherham's progress, and directing his attention to a little shrivelled mummy of a man, who, under sanction of Lord Armytage's recent commendation, was received with the utmost deference by the high-minded Lord of Greta Castle. And, having deposited Mrs. Armytage as quickly as he could in her appointed place, he began to do the honours of the county to a stranger whose liberal principles conferred distinction on his physical exiguity. While the lady of Holywell drew in her robes, lest they should encounter those of the lady of Portland Place, Mrs. Dyke had the satisfaction to observe her good little mannikin of a husband engaged in conversation with three noble lords; and to know that the respect paid him by the heads of the house of Greta and Armytage, borrowed nothing from his affinity with the

Semiramis seated by her side. Soon afterwards, Lord Rotherham requested from his new acquaintance an introduction to his lady; and Mrs. Armytage, though affecting to be engaged in earnest conversation with her next neighbour, Lady Maudsley, could not forbear overhearing fragments of their chit-chat.

"Yes! indeed!—highly delighted with Yorkshire. My first visit to the county; but not likely to be my last. Capital races! finest thing of the kind in Europe,—best county-meeting in England: so different from a scramble to Epsom or Ascot!"

Lord Rotherham "trusted she had been able to secure comfortable accommodations?"

"Accommodations? Oh, dear! yes! The best that were to be had for money. Arthur Armytage (poor fellow!) wrote good naturedly to apologize for not being able to invite us to stop at Holywell; as if we had any notion of burying ourselves at a place nearly twenty miles off, when good lodgings were to be had in the town! Lord bless him! my brother

Baltimore's friend, Tom Warley, took rooms for us at the Angel six months back. Famous rooms! So good, indeed, that we have been able to oblige the Duchess of Spalding with a bed or two. Her party has turned out larger than she expected!"

Lord Rotherham, with a civil smile, now hoped that she was going to make some stay in Yorkshire?"

"Six weeks or two months, at least. My niece Armytage (that such a woman should *have* a niece Armytage! the word grated painfully on the ear of her neighbour) is coming along with us to Scarborough."

"To Scarborough?" His Lordship expressed great satisfaction at the intelligence. His own family were likely to visit Scarborough; and Lady Rotherham would be much gratified in the honor of her acquaintance.

Mrs. Robsey bowed and smiled, and fanned herself. She was eminently triumphant—eminently happy. Her dear little Marian

had been with her all the morning; grateful, simple, and affectionate as ever: and now, the whole world—the whole *great* world—seemed entering into a conspiracy to support her cause against Mrs. Armytage. The Duchess of Spalding, who, though apprehensive of promiscuous acquaintances in London, would have felt herself privileged to patronize even a cheesemonger in Yorkshire, without peril to her purity of caste, had, for her own convenience, made acquaintance with the gorgeous stranger, and loaded her with civilities; on which all the small 'squiresses who, at first sight set up their backs at a London woman who ventured to blaze forth at Doncaster without the passport of a county introduction, forgave her, under the sanction of such powerful protection. Mrs. Wemmersley had already bespoken Marian's presentation to her aunt; and Lady Emily Maclaren grew full of graciousness, worthy the wife of the Whig member for Perjureham.

But Marian was now too generally courted,

too universally admired, to have leisure to become the tool of the Wemmersleys. The happiness derived from her recent restoration to her family, imparted a thousand charms to her countenance—a thousand graces to her manner—a thousand of those pure and nameless graces which, like the fragrance of flowers, or song of birds, start forth at Nature's command, and Nature's only. Caressed by the Spaldings, treated with the utmost deference by the whole of the Holywell party, the minor members of the neighbourhood, who had hitherto been given to understand, or who had taken it into their heads to understand, that the marriage of young Armytage was a grievous *mésalliance*, were amazed to find her the niece of a member of parliament, rich in the good graces of their carved idols, the aristocracy of the county; and of a gorgeous dame, rich in chains and bouquets of brilliants, rivalling those of the Duchess of Spalding. They began to entertain a better opinion of her; and Mrs. Dyke had the satisfaction to

hear it, buzzed, in that kind of audible murmur seldom heard except in country ball-rooms,—"That pretty little woman in the pink dress and tiara of diamond wheat-ears is wife to the new member for Thoroton;" or,—"I had no idea that young Mrs. Armytage of Holywell was such a pretty, elegant, little creature. She will be quite one of our county beauties!"

The difficulties of the part which Marian had to play between mother-in-law and aunt, meanwhile, were surmounted with a discretion which evinced considerable accession of tact. With Mrs. Armytage, she was respectful and attentive; with Mrs. Robsey, affectionate and assiduous; without attempting, by look, gesture, or inference, to bring them nearer together. All assumption of arrogance on the part of Mrs. Armytage was thus rendered superfluous. The lady in the violet-satin by her side, seemed utterly unconscious of her presence; and instead of wishing to intrude on her acquaintance, was wholly engrossed by

those more brilliant personages who were so assiduously seeking her own.

At supper, too, the great lady of Holywell had the dissatisfaction of beholding her Mordecai the Jew exalted even above herself. Lord Wyndham Spalding, in gratitude for the excellent stables for which he was indebted to the stranger's good nature, had taken care to secure her a seat among those reserved for his mother's party; and the shrewd eyes of the Duchess having readily detected the feud between her and the object of her Yorkshire antipathies, seized with avidity an opportunity of inflicting mortification on Mrs. Armytage. Winsome Wyn, professionally eschewing the part of a young lady's man, or induced perhaps by secret motives of his own, constituted himself her cavalier; and poor Mrs. Robsey, between the patronage of a Lord and a Duchess, was almost as elated as Jack Baltimore had been that morning, when he found himself a winner on Touchstone, of six hundred and thirty odd sovereigns, lawful coin of the realm.

Every one, in short, was pleased. Every one retired to rest that night in the best of humours with the events and diversions of the day, with the exception indeed of one, whose fate it seemed to be to mar a life of prosperity, by the undue exactions of an imperious temper.

CHAPTER V.

Yet natural are selfish predilections:
Like snakes they writhe about the heart's affections,
  And sometimes, too, infuse a poisonous spirit;
Producing, as by naturalists I'm told,
Torpid insensibility,—stone-cold
  To every human brother's merit.

Dr. Wolcot.

It had been arranged between Marian and her family, that although Mrs. Robsey was to proceed to Scarborough on the day following the races, Arthur and herself should consult the convenience of Mrs. Armytage, by remaining at Holywell till the breaking up of the party assembled under her roof. *She,* of course, on learning their determination, insisted on being no obstacle to their movements, ("no deference—no consideration, was due to *her*") and was peremptory in offering herself up a victim; but Arthur, finding no other plea avail, begged permission to testify his respect towards his

father's relative, Lord Armytage, by postponing the Scarborough journey till after his departure. Now this was adding fuel to the flames of her displeasure; for she had ever made it a matter of petty pride, to estrange the children of her husband from his nobler connexions; and had the vexation to perceive the good understanding between Arthur, and even Marian, and the Armytages hourly increase; till she heartily wished the period of their visit at an end, and herself at liberty to devise new schemes for change of scene for her daily drooping daughter.

It was on the day following the concluding one of the races, when Marian happened to be absent from the drawing-room on a visit to Sophia, who found herself too much indisposed to join the party, that in the course of a discussion on the beauties present at the races, and the flirtations implied or discovered, one of the tall, stiff, Londonized Miss Maudsleys fell into raptures of admiration concerning Rosamond Devonport; the style of whose attractions

she felt to be too different from her own to threaten danger to her conquest.

"Rosa was such a charming little creature, —so sweet,—so *naïve*,—so completely a child of the cloister."

"But what an awkward thing for the Spalding family," cried her elder sister, who had imbibed a tinge of their brother Reginald's pedantry; "if she should prove the cause of family dissension between the two brothers; and create a second Creon and Polynices!"

"No cause for alarm, I fancy," observed Mrs. Armytage. "Lord Wyndham Spalding may render Miss Devonport a screen to other views; but depend upon it, *he* is not a marrying man."

"But how impossible to say, who *is* and who is not a marrying man!" cried the giddy Lady Chartley. "That wooden sign-post of a Yankee, whom my cousin Arthur showed me on the race-course,—*who* would have ever dreamed of *his* making an impression on a

with a rustic portico. You must ask Mrs. Armytage to drive you over to see the Grange."

"Most willingly; to-morrow, or any other day. This morning, I fear, the horses will scarcely be at our disposal," observed the lady of the house.

But it appeared that on the morrow, General and Mrs. Devereux, impatient to return to their children, were to proceed back into Leicestershire. How very provoking! The Grange, commended so highly by Lord Armytage, became an immediate object of interest.

"I believe we are to have a riding party this morning," observed one of the Maudsleys. "You ride, Mrs. Devereux? I have often seen the place, and will willingly give up my horse; and as Mrs. Arthur Armytage is to accompany you, she can introduce you to the Maranhams."

"I am afraid *not*," said Mrs. Armytage drily. "I fancy the gates will be closed against any persons presenting themselves under the auspices of Mrs. Arthur Armytage."

"Aha!" cried Lord Armytage, becoming interested in the subject; "are the old ladies jealous of her youth and beauty?—I thought Miss Anarilla, whom I saw acting chaperon at the ball, answered me somewhat tartly when I expressed my very great admiration of my friend Arthur's choice."

"How shockingly ungracious!" cried Mrs. Devereux. "I should have thought Mrs. Arthur a person too mild to give offence to any one!'

"Nevertheless," resumed Mrs. Armytage; "my old friends, the Misses Maranham, have expressed their determination never to set foot at Holywell so long as my daughter-in-law remains my inmate; and formally requested to be dispensed from her future visits to the Grange."

"War to the knife, then!" cried Lord Armytage. "Why, the old women must be demented. If Mrs. Devereux will accept my unworthy escort, we will ride over to the Grange and bring them to reason or demand

satisfaction. My dear Mrs. Arthur!" cried he, addressing Marian, who just then entered the room, with a countenance depressed by her daily increasing uneasiness on Sophia's account, "What is the meaning of all this? What crime of *lèse pruderie*, or other outrage against the rigid code of spinster morality, have you committed, to merit sentence of exclusion from the gates of the Grange?"

"*Am* I excluded from the gates of the Grange?" inquired Marian, relapsing into one of her sweet smiles. "I was not aware of it; but I fear I deserve my sentence."

"Indeed! You excite my wonder and curiosity."

"While on a visit at Spalding Court, I was foolish enough to accompany Lady Emily Maclaren to the Grange; and (out of deference to the political prejudices of the family) presented her under a feigned name. By some means or other, Mrs. Di discovered the imposture."

"The cloven foot of Toryism peeped out, I

suppose. I dare say Lady Emily began canvassing Mrs. Di for Lord Leicester Spalding's next election."

"No—indeed; she never ventured to open her lips."

"Lady Emily Maclaren struck dumb? Why this is a more exquisite song than the other."

"I have reason to believe that Mrs. Maranham's displeasure is of a nature far more deeply rooted,"—said Mrs. Armytage mysteriously; "but, with your Lordship's permission, we will not now discuss the subject. Can any one inform me what has become of my son? Has any one seen my son?"

And on learning from Marian that Arthur had walked with General Devereux into the village, in order to show him the school-houses, the plan and system of which the General was desirous of obtaining, with a view to improving those on his own estate, the brow of Mrs. Armytage became heavily overclouded. This was a decided breach of privilege on the part

of her son! There was nothing she more dearly loved than doing the honours of every establishment connected with Holywell. The plans, excellent in themselves, were her own: and no one but herself, she conceived, could do justice to their particularities.

"Had my son condescended to apprise *me* of General Devereux's desire," said she, "I should have felt much honoured by the task of explaining to him the principles of my school."

"I believe they are gone to visit Dr. Grant," said Marian, in an apologizing tone. "General Devereux has some private business to talk over with Dr. Grant."

"I should not be surprised if it were about the Swimmingley living!" cried Mrs. Devereux, rousing herself from her lounging position. "The General had a letter yesterday from his steward, informing him of a most shocking accident in our establishment." (Lord Armytage and the rest were of opinion that, whatever might be the nature of the catastrophe,

it had not very seriously influenced the spirits of either the General or his wife; but the lady did not leave them in suspense.) "The Rector of Swimmingley has been unluckily killed by the accidental discharge of his gun when out shooting; and Devereux, who purchased the advowson with the estate, is determined he will have no more sporting parsons so near us. He proposes, indeed, to give his preferment to the most deserving person he can find. I wanted him to present my cousin Hamilton Lyndsay, Lord Lyndsay's younger son; but he was ill-natured enough to say that Hamilton was an empty coxcomb, and would not hear of him. The living amounts to nearly a thousand a-year."

"That would be a great thing for our friend Grant," said Lord Armytage, addressing his elder kinswoman. "I heartily trust the General may be induced to offer it to him. He could nowhere find a more upright, a more conscientious parish priest."

Mrs. Armytage, accustomed to regard Dr.

Grant as a domestic apanage of Holywell,—"her ox, her ass, her goods, her chattels," as much a portion of her property as Holywell church, which she considered less the House of God than the chapelry of Holywell Park,—almost trembled with excitement at the prospect of having him subtracted from her service by the officious interposition of others. And the danger appeared imminent.

"What a windfall for the poor Doctor!" cried Sir John Maudsley, who had been poring over the county paper.

"But what a loss for *us!*" ejaculated Marian. And Mrs. Armytage had scarcely patience with the collective pronoun purporting to associate the niece of Mrs. Robsey with the Holywell family, on such an occasion.

"I can scarcely imagine," said she, with great hauteur, "that my son would take any step in an affair of so much importance to myself, without first consulting my intentions!"

"You must forgive him, my dear Madam,

you really must forgive him," cried Lord Armytage,—if we find that zeal for the advancement of so excellent a man as Dr. Grant has caused my friend Arthur to act with precipitation."

But at that moment, Mrs. Armytage was deaf to the voice of the charmer. She was engrossed by silent regrets,—secret repentance,—that her love of prerogative had so long prevented her pledging herself to Dr. Grant for the gift of the living of Thoroton, whenever it might fall vacant. Aware as she was of the expectations he must have been necessarily tempted to form, not a word had she ever uttered in explanation of her intentions. And now, she was probably about to lose him, in just retribution of her fault!

She was not, however, the woman to resign herself to defeat. Prompt in determination,—prompt in action,—she passed immediately to the library, and, within a few minutes of Mr. Devereux's communication, one of the Holywell servants was bearing hastily across the

park to the vicarage, the following communication from his lady:—

"Having accidentally learned, my dear Sir, the stirring temptations held out to you to desert a neighbourhood where I have long indulged hopes of seeing you fixed for life, I take the opportunity of offering, as an alternative, the reversion of my living of Thoroton; and, till it fall vacant, a compensatory salary of one thousand per annum. With these inducements, pray place in the scale the perfect esteem, respect, and gratitude of your obliged friend and neighbour,

"CAROLINE MAUDSLEY ARMYTAGE."

But, on returning to the drawing-room after the despatch of this important missive, the patroness was disagreeably startled by the sight of two unwelcome objects; her little grand-daughter, whose presence had been earnestly begged by the ladies of the party, in order to while away a heavy morning;—and

Mr. Leonidas Lomax, come to pay a formal visit of leave-taking to the Holywell family, previously to the solemnization of his illustrious nuptials. She was provoked to hear the admiration bestowed on the animation of little Harriet, crowing and laughing in the arms of the good-natured Lord Armytage; but was fortunately spared the tirade with which Leonidas had been privately edifying Sir John Maudsley, during her absence.

"I own it afflicts me," said Leo. Lo. (having, since his august connexion with the peerage, renounced the defence of the "federal" principle for that of the "feudal")—"to see an ancient line like this of Holywell, centering at length in yonder little feeble *gurl*. The Salique law is still in operation among the fiefs of the empire,—(*in terram Salicam mulieres ne succedant,*) and it were much to be desired that though, as the immortal bard of Avon sings,

> —the land Salique lies in Germany,
> Between the floods of Sala and of Elbe,

its custom of inheritance should prevail throughout the world. What error, alas!—*what crimes*,—have arisen under the ascendancy of female domination!—Semiramis of old, the murderer of her husband; Christina of Sweden, the murderer of her secretary; Elizabeth of England, the murderer of her lovers; Elizabeth of Russia, and Anne of England, martyrs of intemperance; Catherine the Second, that prominent blot on modern history,—are fearful examples of the mischiefs arising from feminine supremacy. It is contrary to Scripture,—Sir, it is contrary to reason, to attribute to the weaker vessel—"

He paused, and stood (his oratorical right arm extended) like the image of a man carved in hickory,—not venturing to proceed; for Mrs. Armytage just then re-entered the room; and a single glance of her penetrating eyes suspended the current of Leonidas's Yankee eloquence.

CHAPTER V.

Yes! I had hopes, and they are fled;
And I had fears, were all too true;
My wishes, too,—but they are dead—
And what have I with life to do?
'Tis but to bear a weary load
I may not, must not cast away;—
To sigh for one small still abode
Where I may sleep as still as they.

ST. LEGER.

A FEW more days elapsed, and the Holywell party was dispersed, when Arthur and his wife, after an affectionate farewell from Sophia, and a ceremonious one from Mrs. Armytage, proceeded on their tour. Arthur's last visit was to Greta Castle, to bespeak from Lady Laura, for his sister, during their absence, that warmer assiduity of kindness which sickness demands, and for which her own brother, previous to his return to his official duties, had already pleaded; a visit which proved sufficient to

lend new attractions to the Scarborough road, in the eyes of his jealous little wife.

And now Marian's prospects were indeed enchanting! Six weeks' liberty,—six weeks' emancipation,—her husband, child, father, aunt; the sea, the shore, the new and beautiful country,—rides, drives, dinners, balls, with her kind friends the Spaldings; what a change from that chain-armoury of feuds and ceremonies,—Holywell Park! But for the mournful tenderness with which, at parting, Miss Armytage hung over and embraced her little niece, Marian would not have had a sorrow or a care in the world!

And then the cordial reception of Aunt Robsey, and the good little senator's exulting exclamation to Arthur, of—"Obliged to sleep at Malton?—ay, ay!—when we have brought in our bill for the Scarborough rail-road, you will drive over from Holywell to take a sea-water bath, and back again for dinner." While his lady, full of the joys of libraries and raffles, moss-agates, and cornelians, loudly exulted in

the prospect of six weeks' busy idleness at a watering-place.

All Mrs. Arthur's anticipations appeared on the eve of realization, with the exception of the balls; for, already, the servants, horses, and other cattle, belonging to the Spalding family had arrived the preceding day, at the vast, red-brick barn engaged for them,—the servants in uncustomary suits of solemn black,—the very horses with sable rosettes to their blinkers. It was clear that they were all very sorry about something; and, by a little dexterous whispering among the gentry of the Lower Chamber, or servants' hall, (which contrary to the custom of other chambers, borrows its intelligence directly from the Upper House, or steward's room,) Mrs. Dyke managed to ascertain that her Grace had lost a brother, and Lord Wyndham gained a title and estate; a small estate, —but a title no less flowing than that of Baron Wildingham of Wildingham. The loss, and, consequently, the gain, seemed unexpected. For the late lord, who was by many years the

junior of the Duchess, a long life had been anticipated; and many people were of opinion that he had been, with malice prepense, tormented into a pleurisy by her Grace, who chose to detect a Murillo, for which he had given four thousand pounds, to be a copy; and had pointed out a flaw in the finest of his fictile vases:—facts which, had they come to th-knowledge of Leo. Lo. (or as the London Gazette now entitled us to call him, Mr. Lomax Marscourt), coupled with the terms of entail conveying title and fortune to his sister's second son, might perhaps have added a new chapter to his dissertation on the crimes consequent upon female domination.

"As I knew nothing of the old Lord," said Mrs. Robsey to Arthur, "I am mighty glad your friend has come to his estate. But such a coxcomb as he was before,—bless us all!—what will he be *now?*"

"You are mistaken," was the well-judging reply. "Wyn was a coxcomb, because he fancied puppyism the only means of distinc-

tion within his reach;—now he finds himself somebody, he will think of distinction as a thing indifferent."

"For my part," said aunt Robsey, looking very wise, "I don't quite understand about what you call puppyism,—particularly about French puppyism. Now there was that fashionable Monsieur Clerrymill who used to dine so often in Portland Place last season——"

"Monsieur Cléramel and his flute?" interrupted Marian.

"Exactly, my dear!—Monsieur Clerrymill and his flute had always a knife and fork at our table; and there he used to sit, sable from head to foot,—not an inch of cambric,—not a colour—not a trinket to be seen;—black and all black, as my brother Baltimore would say, like Romeo when he breaks open the tomb of the Capulets: and when I inquired of some particular friend of his whether it was for his father or his mother Monsieur was in mourning, the friend laughed and said, 'Clerrymill was a

jeune élégant, and that it was the height of French dandyism to be as black as a crow.' "

"And so it is," said Marian.

"And pray then what was the meaning of Lord Wyndham's flashy waistcoats, and chains, and studs, and all his nonsenses?—When he used to drive his cab through Pall Mall with his hat stuck on one side, and his cream-coloured gloves,—he always put me in mind of a dandy in a farce. There certainly must be two kinds of French puppyism."

"Exactly! There is the puppyism of the many, which affects to shrink into simplicity, on pretence of a very superfluous desire to pass unnoticed. But there is also the puppyism of the few,—the glaring, flashy puppyism of those who fancy themselves in a position which entitles them to attract attention. The novel of 'Pelham' drove half the young Frenchmen out of their senses. Not detecting the irony of its pages, they founded a matter-of-fact school of Pelhamites;—and the English caricature

was adopted as an historical picture on the Boulevards. Pelham did more mischief to *la jeune France*, than all the works of Voltaire or Rousseau."

"Well, it certainly was a most amusing book!" cried Mrs. Robsey, taking her own view of the case: "and, now you remind me of it, I declare Lord Wyndham, or as we must now call him Lord Wildingham, *is* or *was* the very image of Henry Pelham."

It was some time, however, before Mrs. Dyke had an opportunity of deciding what influence his accession to the peerage had exercised over the object of her conjectures. The Duchess and her daughters arrived,—all crape and broad hems,—escorted by the apathethic Lord Cecil; but Lord Downham was off to Brighton to take a course of Mahomet's beauty baths; and Lord Wildingham to London, to confer with his lawyers, call in his debts, study his rent-roll, and luxuriate in the newly-acquired troubles of a man of fortune. In all this, meanwhile, it was plain that there

was something vexatious to her Grace. While grief depressed the corners of her mouth, indignation contracted the arching of her jetty eyebrows. It might be that she had expected to find honourable mention of herself, as well as her son, in the will of the late lord; it might be that she had obtained from her daughters some hint of the sudden passion conceived by the present, for the Rose of the Grange; it might be that the answers brought back every morning by her page from Donner's Hotel, respecting a suite of apartments said to be, supposed to be, or expected to be engaged for the Duke of Wetherby, were of an unsatisfactory nature.

Yet, even lacking both the Duke and the Baron, Scarborough was gay and pleasant enough for the world in general. The weather was fine. There was the castle hill to explore, the ruins to sketch, Robin Hood's Bay to traverse, Filey and its wild and breezy shore to make the object of a drive. The soft and autumnal-tinted valley leading to Hack-

ness, afforded many a charming ride—many a charming saunter; after which, late dinners, a little music, and a little gossip, filled up the sober hours of those who affected weak health and sea-bathing as an excuse for frequenting a watering-place.

Marian was perfectly happy. She could not understand what induced the Spaldings to protest with peevish discontent that they had never seen Scarborough so dull, so disagreeable, so empty; "not a soul there—not a *chat de société!*" It did not occur to her that the absence of a single, silent duke had made so vast a deficiency in the attractions of the place; nor was she aware that poor Lady Honoria, having flattered herself of being followed from Doncaster by Lord Edward Brereton, was chewing the young lady-like "cud of sweet and bitter fancies." Not even the prospect of the arrival of the bride and bridegroom, "Mr. and the Hon. Mrs. Lomax Marscourt," seemed to afford any hope of diversion to the Spalding family. While Mr. Dyke

Robsey, unable to keep pace with the vivacity of an Arthur Armytage, or to penetrate the tortoise-like inaccessibility of Lord Leicester Spalding, flattered himself that in the ex-citizen of the free country, he should meet with sympathy in his diminutive enthusiasm for the cause of railroads and radical reform, while his gay lady rejoiced in the prospect of a peep at the wedding-clothes of an aristocratic bride,—the lady cousins voted all the world a bore, and all the men and women merely torments. Mrs. Arthur Armytage might find amusement in trotting on a long-tailed pony on the sands of Filey, or admiring the golden beeches of Hackness;—but what profitless pleasures for the unmarried daughters of a Duchess of Spalding!

Far different meanwhile were the mournfully meditative looks that fixed themselves upon those falling autumnal leaves, among the groves of Holywell! Sophia Armytage felt with that inward conviction, which is one of the most gracious inspirations of divine

love, that she was gazing upon them for the last time;—felt it, not without awe, not without exultation. She could not accuse herself of having given way to idle sorrow; who, amid all her griefs and disappointments,

> Some natural tears had dropp'd
> But wiped them soon;

and the blight which had fallen upon her frame seemed as inevitable a dispensation as that which, on a sunny summer day, will breathe upon the choicest flower-garden—

> And nip its buds from blowing!

Satisfied that she had been marked for early death, the victim had at length so far surmounted the clinging predilections of mortality, as to admit that all had chanced for the best; that as a happy wife—perhaps a happy mother—she might have found this barren world "enough for bliss," and clung with too fast a hold upon the tendernesses of human life. Yes! all had been for the best!

The way to death was now comparatively

easy. The lover of her youth had forsaken her;—her brother was happy in household ties of a more engrossing nature;—her mother (Sophia *could* not flatter herself that she was essential to the happiness of her mother!) had a new race springing around her; even the little Grants were growing up to womanhood, and might dispense with her instructions. She knew that when *she* was gone, her poor would still be clothed, her hungry fed, her sick comforted. She felt that she had a right to die! The father who has a family to toil for,—the mother with babes to nurture and to cherish,—*must* live,—*must* struggle with disease,—*must* resist the longing after immortality, or yearning for the stillness of the grave. But Sophia Armytage, as she gazed upon

> La face des eaux, le front des montagnes
> Ridés et non vieillis,—et les bois toujours verts—

could feel that her task was accomplished, her day of peace appointed; could murmur—

Mais moi, sous chaque jour, courbant plus bas ma tête,
Je passe,—et, refroidie sous ce soleil joyeux,
Je m'en irai bientôt, au milieu de la fête,
Sans que rien manque au monde, immense et radieux!

Still, nothing could, would, or did excite on her account the apprehensions of Mrs. Armytage. She saw that her daughter was "very delicate—very weak;" but Sophia had never been strong; and no positive disorder having declared itself, time and care would no doubt complete her restoration. Lady Rotherham, too, was an unlucky neighbour for such a case. Lady Rotherham had seen so many delicate girls recovered even from the depths of a consumption by asses' milk, and a certain preparation of Iceland moss, that Sophia Armytage scarcely yet appeared sufficiently ill to justify the infallibility of her specific!

Lady Laura was the only person who discerned the truth. Lady Laura, who knew the happiness of a dearly-loved brother to be centered in Sophia's restoration to health and cheerfulness, scarcely suffered a day to pass without assuring herself, by the evidence of

her own tearful eyes, that the invalid was weaker than on the day preceding. The name of Rainsford had never been mentioned between them from the period when both became assured of the solemnization of his marriage, and Lady Laura was guided only by her own suppositions, in the belief that her friend's disorder was seated beyond the reach of human aid. Still she *did* believe it; and honestly admit to Lord Greta her conviction that he was building his hopes of happiness on a foundation of sand. Finding it impossible to alarm Mrs. Armytage, she even addressed her own father and mother with earnest entreaties that they would interpose their influence to procure the best advice, and change of atmosphere and scene, for her fast-declining friend.

But a more powerful advocate than either was enlisted in the cause. Dr. Grant, who had been persevering in his hopes that strength of mind and force of youth would enable Miss Armytage to surmount the blow

she had received,—who even trusted that his own exhortations might suffice to impress her with the sinfulness of yielding to the ascendancy of vain regrets and fruitless affections,—at length discerned the imminency of the danger, and felt it incompatible with his duty to conceal the truth from Mrs. Armytage.

He had recently acquired a double right of remonstrance with his patroness. General Devereux had made it his business to acquaint her with the good pastor's immediate and unqualified refusal of the rich preferment tendered to him; and she had not only the gratification to know that, in his love for the flock committed to his hand, he had chosen to remain dependent on her will, but had even refused the temporary provision assigned to him by her liberality. "Had you judged it due to my services, my dear Madam, you would have tendered it long ago," was his proud reply. "The labourer is worthy of his hire. When I am appointed to fulfil the duties of rector of Thoroton, the stipend will

naturally be mine." And the haughty woman's respect for the vicar of Holywell had been a thousand-fold increased by this evidence of his nobleness of mind.

Dr. Grant had at all times access to her presence; and when, one evening, after a prolonged visit to Sophia, he requested an audience of Mrs. Armytage in her library, she simply attributed the request to some dilemma of village business,—some one of a family of fifteen children to be apprenticed,—some aged woman to be admitted into the infirmary,—some youthful depredator to be chastised or admonished,—some dutiful child rewarded. She entered the library, therefore, with her most magisterial air,—with that stately step which spoke her descent from the Maudsleys of Domesday Book, and her presiding over an estate of fifteen thousand per annum.

But, after an hour's conference, very different was the gait with which she re-crossed the hall! Not David, when shrinking beneath the rebuke of Nathan, could have worn an air

more conscience-struck! Her face was ghastly —her step faltering. Grief for her daughter's danger was deepened into despair by her knowledge of its origin. She would have given much to have kneeled down beside Sophia's couch, and poured out her agony in tears. But Dr. Grant had insisted so strongly on the urgency of avoiding all cause of agitation for the invalid, that she could only retire to indulge in solitary misery,—to commune with her own heart, and in her chamber, and be still!

CHAPTER VI.

Her griefs, her joys, alike, in vain
Would memory here recall;
Her throbs of ecstasy or pain
Lull'd in oblivion all.
With *her*, methinks, life's little hour
Pass'd, like the fragrance of a flower,
That leaves upon the vernal wind
Sweetness we ne'er again may find.

JAMES MONTGOMERY.

THE following day was a busy day at Holywell. The Doncaster physician, so highly esteemed by Mrs. Armytage, having been hastily summoned, was at the house soon after day-break; and after hearing a decided opinion that no time must be lost in Sophia's removal to the South, her mother issued orders for instant preparations for their departure. On the following morning they were to start for Clifton.

"My dear mother," whispered Sophia, as soon as they were alone together, "all this is

useless *now*. Let me stay quietly at Holywell—let me die at home. The journey is a needless disturbance. I wish to remain near Dr. Grant. I wish——"

"You wish to break my heart!" cried Mrs. Armytage, giving way to an unusual burst of emotion. "You would deny me even the poor comfort of doing my utmost for your restoration to health. A few weeks in the mild climate of Bristol, and your recovery is certain. Will you refuse me the trial of a few weeks?"

And how could Sophia refuse? A few weeks—a few weeks to the mother who had given her life!—A few weeks, when she knew that her very days were numbered!

"Let us at least remain at Holywell," she still remonstrated, "till Arthur and Marian are apprized of our intentions. I should like to see them once more before——" She could not conclude her sentence!

But no! A delay of four days was indispensable to secure the interview. The weather

was already chilly, the days short, and the necessity for immediate change of air most urgent. Mrs. Armytage decided that they must quit Holywell on the morrow.

And on the morrow they went. Sophia would willingly have paid one last visit to the village—have entered for the last time, and with reverential step, the portals of Holywell church—have thrown herself once more into the arms of her dear Laura, her childhood's friend—have uttered a parting word to her good old nurse—a parting blessing to her spiritual teacher. But Mrs. Armytage decided that all this was not to be; and Dr. Grant, kindly coinciding in her desire, would not even permit his girls to show themselves at the Vicarage window as the carriage passed its gates, lest the excitement should prove injurious to his young friend. *He*, indeed, watched it, unseen;—*unseen* observed the wistful glance cast by Sophia towards the eastern window of the church, where glimmered the marble monuments of the family of Maudsley—where

lay the grave of her father. But he heard also the blessings poured upon her name as he slowly followed the progress of the carriage through the village. He heard the prayers of the poor for her recovery. He saw both old and young turning within their doors to weep that they had looked, perhaps, for the last time on the pale face of their benefactress. And he saw that all was well—that the servant of the Lord might depart in peace—that her burthen had been nobly borne.

It was not till a week afterwards that, by a letter dated from Worcester, Arthur was apprized of his mother's movements. Dr. Grant, satisfied that Mrs. Armytage must have communicated all to her son, was too much absorbed by his own feelings to find leisure for writing an unnecessary letter; and Lady Laura, although she suspected the real state of the case, having been officiously acquainted by Mrs. Wemmersley that she was an object of jealous suspicion to Arthur's wife, resisted the kindly impulses of her

nature. But even his mother's letter excited no particular alarm. It merely informed him that she was advised to pass the winter at Clifton—that Sophia had borne the journey well, and was already improving in health; and that, as he must be in town the following month for the meeting of parliament, she concluded Marian would either remain with her family at Scarborough, or accompany them to London.

Mrs. Armytage's "conclusions" were always conclusive. Arthur saw at once, therefore, that it was not intended either himself or his wife should pass the winter at Holywell; although, as it was expected that parliament would be almost immediately prorogued, nothing would have better suited his inclinations than to leave his wife in the country during his short absence, and return to pass a cheerful, neighbourly, sporting winter, at home,—the home that was in fact his own. Unapprized of the sinister opinions recently given by her medical advisers of the state of Sophia's health, and

receiving no letter from his sister, he felt secretly convinced that Mrs. Armytage had suddenly quitted the country only to avoid hearing or seeing more of the Robseys, whom she might fancy were likely to be delayed in Yorkshire by the civilities of the Gretas, or the hospitality of Spalding Castle; under such circumstances, he felt that Sophia would be too tender of Marian's feelings to write,—lest the truth should become apparent.

What else but such self-deception arising from the unjustifiable reserve of his mother, would have prevented the kind affectionate Arthur from flying to the solace of his dying sister,—protecting her on her melancholy journey,—soothing her desolate hours,—comforting her occasional despondency, from being all in all, in short, to one who was falling a victim to wounded affections,—to neglect,—to desertion. But deceived as he was, Arthur continued to ride, to laugh, to chat, to dance, to sing,—while the companion of his earliest love was resigning herself to that gradual progress

of hectic decay, which seems as though the icy fingers of death were daily stealing higher and higher upon the shrinking bosom, till their fatal seal is affixed upon the quivering lips, and the breath of life becomes extinct beneath their touch!

Marian, indeed, would often sigh for news of the invalid—often write and often wonder that her letters remained unanswered. She loved to describe to her aunt the angelic mildness of Sophia's character, the consolation she had derived from her warm affection in the chilling atmosphere of Holywell; the expectations she feared she must now renounce of finding a friend—a steadfast, estimable, exemplary friend, in the sister of her husband: and, in detailing to her aunt the symptoms of Miss Armytage, and the rapid manner in which her disorder had developed itself, she would inquire very earnestly whether Mrs. Robsey discerned any tokens of the family infirmity in little Harriet—or whether she thought dear Arthur likely to prove consump-

tive? But the good lady reassured her at once. She saw neither pulmonary ailment in Marian's darlings, nor suspected a distemper of the mind in the sufferings of Sophia.

"My dear, the case is plain enough!" said she. "The poor girl has been moped to death No London, no Brighton, no Bath, like other young persons of her age;—nothing but that overbearing despot of a woman for a companion, nothing to cheer her, nothing to amuse her;—I am sure I can't imagine what pleasure the poor soul ever found in life."

"But if Sophia had pleased to marry Lord Greta, who has been so long attached to her, then she might have had London, and court, and jewels, and all the things you say women are so fond of,—yet, you see, she preferred Holywell!"

"Well—there is no accounting for tastes," was Mrs. Robsey's reply, "for I must say I never saw a more agreeable, sensible young man than Lord Greta. And though Lord Botherum—Rotherham—(what is his name?)

is not perhaps so fine a gentleman as some noblemen we could name, he seems a most worthy person; to say nothing of the grandeur of Greta Castle, and all the rest of it. There is something unaccountable in the business!—I do think the Armytages are all a little odd; and as to *Mrs.* Armytage, the grand Seignior is a nobody to her!

"She is certainly very disagreeable," sighed Marian;—"but she has great qualities."

"Great?—give me good ones!" retorted her aunt. "What business has a woman with *great* qualities? Unless you could make a Lord Chancellor, an Archbishop of Canterbury, or a Commander-in-Chief of Mrs. Armytage, I don't see any use that her qualities could be put to! After all, Billy Pitt himself, if he had been born for petticoats, would have made nothing but a domineering, interfering woman of business!"

Marian was spared the trouble of defending her sex or her mother-in-law; a more agreeable occupation awaited her. The good aunt

and uncle had contrived a charming surprise for her; and her hopes, long deferred, of being once more clasped in the arms of her mother, were happily accomplished. Mrs. Baltimore, too tender of her child to be over-tender of herself, had found the York mail a sufficiently noble mode of conveyance to remit her to Marian; and with one of Jack's "young 'uns" on her knee, (a little curly-pated ruffian of five years old,) had made her way to join her husband at Tom Warley's, and *from* Tom Warley's the happy pair had now progressed to Scarborough. Such was Jack's mode of disposing of the first fruits of his winnings on the St. Leger.

Who now so happy as Mrs. Arthur Armytage!—Her father and mother gratified by the certainty that, if an uneasy daughter-in-law, she was the happiest of wives and mothers;—rich in troops of friends,—rich in admiring neighbours,—rich in the prospect of Holywell Park, and the possession of a noble set of diamonds; rich, above all, in her own old, former-day, affectionate, Baker-Street heart,—

and the certainty that little Harriet's first teeth were within a few days of their appearance!—Marian saw no tawdriness in her mother's taste;—no weakness in her over-indulgence of little Jack,—no coarseness—no vulgarity in the wit of Jack the elder—who, it was plain, would never become the old. He assured Mrs. Dyke, the Yorkshire air had made her so fat that she was looking "like a melon on a mile-stone;" and Mrs. Dyke took the personal joke with so good-humoured a laugh, that Marian saw no offence in it; he quizzed the little Robseyling into a belief that Arthur had undertaken to bring into Parliament a bill for a railroad between Colchester and Billingsgate, for the exclusive conveyance of "natives;" and Marian sat by unremonstrating. Her child on her knee, her little brother climbing on the back of her chair, kind friends—kind, loving, unfastidious friends around her, and from the windows a majestic prospect of the Bay of Scarborough,—what more could she possibly desire?

It was in the midst of these domestic pleasures, that there arrived a letter from Dr. Grant, overclouding in a moment the sunshine of her happiness. "I have to entreat," wrote the good pastor to Arthur Armytage, "that you will instantly set off for Holywell, in order to accompany me to Clifton. Miss Armytage is much worse; a fatal change has taken place; and even with the best speed you can use, I fear we must be still too late. I leave it to you and my friend Mrs. Arthur, whether, under such painful circumstances, it were not better that your wife should be spared the pain of witnessing sufferings which she cannot alleviate, more particularly as your mother writes to beg we will use the utmost despatch."

"Certainly—certainly—I should only retard your movements; lose not an hour, dearest Arthur!" cried Marian, her cheeks bathed with tears. "Much as I desire to see her again, I would not for worlds hazard the vexation to all parties of being an unwelcome visitor to Mrs. Armytage at such a moment. I perfectly

understand Dr. Grant. He is all kindness, all wisdom. Go! dearest, and help him to comfort *her*, or those who are left to mourn her."

And her husband hesitated not to obey. Within half an hour of the receipt of the letter, he was off; and Marian was left to her tears. "A fatal change!" and *she* had not been there to return to Sophy the thousand kind and womanly attentions she had received from her in her own hour of thrall. She had not been there to support the fainting head, to wipe away the tear of anguish. Sophia was alone with that haughty-minded mother, so unconversant with the woes of humanity; so unsympathizing with the frailties of a feeble nature. She hoped—she believed—she was sure that the sufferer wished for her; yet dared not intrude her company upon the mother of her dying sister.

On reaching Holywell, Arthur received further intelligence from Dr. Grant, calculated to obliterate every gleam of hope remaining.

Over-exerted by the fatigues of her journey Sophia had ruptured a blood-vessel, and now appeared in the last stage of debility; even Mrs. Armytage, so long and obstinately blind to her danger, despaired. Again and again, in the course of their progress from Holywell to Clifton, their hurried, hopeless journey, Arthur Armytage descanted to his friend on the afflicting probability that Sophia's life might have been preserved by timely removal to the South of France; and on the singularity that the child of parents so robust, should fall a sacrifice to what the French have aptly named a *maladie de langueur*. But Dr. Grant, however absorbed by interest for the dying, forebore to endanger the safety of the living. True to his trust, he said not a word of Rainsford's unworthiness, of Sophia's brokenness of heart. Only once, when Arthur, involuntarily clasping his hands, exclaimed, "Poor girl! poor precious sister! to die at twenty-one, without having experienced one day of perfect happiness! Oh! Dr. Grant! my mother, I fear, has

proved a bitter task-mistress to poor Sophia" —the good pastor could not but reply—"Mrs. Armytage may have been at times a harsh parent; but all blame rests not with her. My dear Arthur, the fate of this suffering angel affords a fearful lesson to us, to *us*, the fathers of daughters." But Arthur's senses were deadened by grief; and the unadvised allusion startled him not.

It was evening when they arrived at Clifton. "How I hate the very name of this place!" cried Arthur as they entered the town. For how many of the young, the good, and the beautiful, has its death-bell tolled! I have always dreaded the name of Clifton."

But, as they approached the house, Arthur would have found it difficult to give utterance even to this adjuration; nor could Dr. Grant exhort him as he wished: — he had only courage to breathe forth his hopes in prayer, —in prayer that the loved one might be yet alive. They stopped at the door. There were lights in the house. *Not* the fearful,

dim, steadfast light, proclaiming the watchers over the dead; but lights glaring from room to room. There was movement—there was *hope* within those walls!

With hasty yet careful footsteps, they entered the chamber to which, by the desire of Mrs. Armytage, they were instantly conducted; when a single glance at the already almost beatified countenance of the expiring Sophia, convinced them that the hope still remaining was at least not for this world. Forbidden by her medical attendants to converse, no power could repress the speaking expression of her face on beholding those she loved;—her beaming eye—her happy smile, proclaiming, more intelligibly than words,—"*Now* all is well—*now* I can die in peace,—*now* the one dark step is lightened for my trembling feet. I am satisfied."

Arthur spoke not. He contented himself with lifting from the coverlid her pale, waxen hand, and covering it with tears and kisses. But Dr. Grant approached nearer to the

pillow, and whispered such words of joy and comfort as those only who are accustomed to address the dying, are skilled to use. Though Sophia was speechless, he knew, from long experience, by what yearnings — what misgivings—the parting soul is perplexed,—*he* knew what thorns to remove, what rough places to make plain. And by the expression of mingled humility and confidence of perfect faith, — of perfect trust, — illumining the face of the dying, saw that he was heard and understood. Drawing her brother gently towards her, she imprinted a single kiss upon the forehead of the hand-in-hand companion of her youth, murmured a blessing on his child, took from her finger a ring she was in the habit of wearing, and while placing it on his own, faltered the name of his wife, and instructed him where to find a letter for Marian, to be delivered "when all was over."

The nurse interposing, reminded her of the interdiction of her physician. "I shall only transgress once more," she faintly murmured;

"let my last words be words of gratitude to my mother." They looked round, but Mrs. Armytage had disappeared. They had forgotten her. No one had missed her. Alas! it is only such a mother who, even for a moment, could pass unnoticed from the bed of a dying child!

CHAPTER VI.

And when the morning came, serene
And dim with early showers,
Her quiet eyelids closed—she had
A happier morn than ours!
T. Hood.

It was a night of deep and heartfelt agony to all. But there were no bursts of frantic emotion beside the death-bed of Sophia Armytage. Those who loved her knew that she must die,—and prayed not that her life might be prolonged. They prayed only that all human suffering might be spared her,—that the cup might pass away,—that Heaven would deal gently with one of its chosen ones whom it was calling to itself!

And their prayers were heard. The breath of the dying grew fainter, the eye more dim, the icy hand more cold. But no throb of

anguish seemed working within. Once only, towards morning, her mind seemed to wander; and, raising her head suddenly and wildly from her pillow, she exclaimed "Edgar!—Do not come to disturb me now,—do not—do not disturb me. I am content—I have forgiven you, Edgar! Do not disturb me."

Her brother started at the words, and a new light seemed to break upon his mind; but Mrs. Armytage covered her face with her hands, and groaned aloud. Dr. Grant, more self-possessed than either, kneeled down beside the sufferer, and, by the soothing sound of a prayer familiar to her ears,—a prayer for Divine support lest "for any pains of death the soul should fall from God," recalled the wandering spirit. Sophia never spoke again. A slight convulsion in the closed hands folded in prayer upon her breast, alone indicated the moment when her struggle was over, and Heaven was all in all!

The morning light was just struggling in upon them when that fatal movement became

manifest; and involuntarily all present fell on their knees and prayed, as if an angel were among them. But when, on rising from his devotions, the haggard eyes of Arthur rested on the fallen countenance,—the creature of clay—which alone remained to him of the kind, warm-hearted, fond, endearing sister,—the gentle friend,—the forbearing counsellor,—his feelings would no longer be controlled, and throwing himself on the bed beside her, he wept, and cried aloud—"Why was all this concealed from me; why was I not sent for; why was I not permitted to be near her? She wished for me, she wailed for me,—yet I was kept in ignorance of her condition! Her brother should have been with her from the first,—her brother would have comforted her. Sophia—my own Sophia!—Why did you suffer yourself to be removed from among us?"

Mrs. Armytage could not but hear the ejaculations of her son; but she answered not a word. The tears were sealed in her eyes,—the sorrow iced her heart; she seemed trans-

fixed to stone. Dr. Grant suggested that, after so many nights of watching, she should retire to rest; and she obeyed, as if conscious of the necessity. Yet when she had shut herself into her own apartment, her steps were heard pacing the floor: it was plain she could not rest.

Towards evening, when all had been disposed in order in the chamber of death,—the watch-lights placed,—the winding-sheet enshrouded round the frail attenuated form,—the sweet, sweet face enveloped in lawn less white than its own more than marble paleness,—Dr. Grant, aware that the bereaved mother slept not, and trusting to subdue the demon of restlessness by which she seemed possessed, by the influence of that touching spectacle, invited her to the mournful room. At first, she refused; but when called upon, in the name of Heaven, to come and listen beside the bed of death to the promises of the gospel unto such as die the death of the just, she could not but obey. She followed him mechanically,—me-

chanically listened to his words. He saw with pain that they reached not her heart; but at such a moment, how could such a man conceive that she had hardened it while listening to the involuntary reproaches of her son?

And soon, other arrangements,—those importunate forms which come so inopportunely to harass the house of mourning, required attention. It was necessary for directions to be issued; yet Arthur dared not spare his mother the painful task of exercising her authority.

"Let every thing be done in the most liberal manner,"—was her reply to the interrogations of Dr. Grant. "Let every outward respect be paid. I wish my daughter to be buried with her family at Holywell."

But the good pastor, averse to the pomps of death as to the pomps of life, suggested that Miss Armytage might perhaps have expressed wishes of her own on such a subject;—"that she might have left a will."

"She had no will but mine!"—was the too fatally true rejoinder of Mrs. Armytage.

"Still, as she had recently attained her majority"—Dr. Grant began.

"Search, if you will,"—hastily interrupted Mrs. Armytage, amazed that, for the first time, the power of volition should be attributed to her departed child. "I own it will surprise me if—but no matter. Let her desk be opened in my presence."

And the first thing that presented itself *was* a will,—placed so as if intended to meet their immediate search; dated several months back, and proving that, from the first, Sophia had foreseen the fatal issue of her illness. Instead of requiring "every outward respect to be paid to her remains," *she* made it an especial request that all might be done in the simplest manner consistent with propriety; that she might be laid in the church wherein she had been accustomed through life to worship God,—(*she* thought not of it, as of the burying-place of her ancestors) and borne to the grave by the poor of her mother's village.—Yes! even in that melancholy page, she forgot

not to designate Holywell as her "*mother's* village!"

Her fortune was bequeathed to her little niece, with the reserve of one third, disposed of in legacies to her *protégées*, the Grants, to her old nurse, to her personal attendants. To her mother she bequeathed her thanks,—those thanks which Mrs. Armytage had not been present to gather from her dying lips: for what gift or treasure else was there to offer to the fortune-laden mistress of Holywell? Yet even that bequest was qualified by a touching petition, that she would be kind to Arthur and Marian. "They are now your only children," was the form of the entreaty. "Give them not only your protection, but your love and confidence; for you know not, dearest mother, how it freezes the heart to know that one is cared for as a duty, not cherished as a delight. Love them, mother, for they are deserving your utmost affection."

"My young friend was evidently unaware," observed Dr. Grant, as with a subdued voice

he recited aloud the terms of the will of which himself and Arthur were named executors, "that this instrument, intended for the perusal of her family alone, must be publicly enregistered, to secure its validity."

And again Mrs. Armytage hardened her heart. She was not only to be admonished by her children; but their counsels were to become subject for the commentary of every clerk in Doctors' Commons.

"It seems I have no further instructions to give, no further wishes to express," said she, rising with frigid mien to quit the room. "I am ready, meanwhile, to obey the summons of my daughter's executors, whenever they have made their arrangements."

And from that day till the morning on which the funeral cavalcade quitted Clifton, she did not leave her chamber or admit Arthur to her presence. Her son was shocked when she issued forth at last in her mother's mourning, on the appointed day, to see what ravages emotion had made in her appearance,—the

rigidity of her features, the pallor of her complexion; but Dr. Grant was far more shocked to witness her impenetrability of spirit; to see that she grieved with the pride of a stoic, not with the humble-mindedness of a Christian! Now was not the moment, however, to reprove her, when she was following the body of her child to the grave. But he felt that a time must come when it would be his duty to wrestle with the unamended hardness of her heart.

It was at once an afflicting and a cheering sight, to behold that funeral procession, with its nodding plumes and flowing scarfs of white, —white as the purity of her it served to convey to the dust—enter the village of Holywell. The road was strewed with flowers: every garden far and near had been despoiled to do the last honours to one who had not left behind her the memory of a good action neglected, *a single unkind word, a single look of harshness!* Every window, every door in the village, was closed, the business of life suspended; the plough was still in the fields, the sheep-boy's song on the

hills; young and old, in one mighty yet silent and reverential throng, were assembled in the ancient avenue, to see the bier of the only daughter of the house of Holywell borne forth on the shoulders of the elders of the village. Saving the stifled sobs of the poor, not a sound was heard, till Dr. Grant, with his head bowed down with irrepressible grief, came forth from the church portals to welcome the dead, in those words of Christian exultation that seem to speak as with a voice from the grave. Every seat was already filled, when the body was borne into the aisle. The Rotherham family, in mourning as for a child of their own, were weeping apart; and Lord Greta, who had come down from London to pay the last homage to the object of his unavailing affections, stood folded in his cloak, pale as an image of despair. Supporting Arthur on his arm as they stood together at the mouth of the vault, when the dust was shaken on the hollow coffin of her they loved, it had been difficult to

determine which were the nearer kinsman, the deeper mourner.

It had been the express desire of Mrs. Armytage, that Marian should not be summoned from Scarborough to attend the funeral; and her wishes, even if unreasonable, were at such a moment to be implicitly obeyed. It was also her desire, that her son, immediately after the ceremony, should proceed to join his family; and Arthur, perceiving his mother had set her heart on being alone at Holywell, in order, as he concluded, to feed her affliction, or soothe it by reminiscences of her lost child, would not remonstrate. But he felt too harassed, too overwhelmed, to proceed at once on his journey; and readily accepted the affectionate proposal of the Rotherhams, made through Dr. Grant, that he should pass a day at Greta Castle, to recover his strength and self-possession. No explanation was due to Mrs. Armytage. Having taken an affectionate leave of her, he proceeded to the roof of those

who, if they loved him not better, treated him at least with more of parental tenderness than his mother.

But Arthur had chosen ill for his happiness. On certain subjects Marian's affectionate lips were sealed even towards her husband. She would have said nothing to him reflecting on his mother's disposition. But Lady Laura's impetuous character could not be controlled. Stung to the soul by the loss of that beloved friend whom she had trusted would in the end become her sister,—by the agony of the brother whom she loved and honoured, and who, unable to bear even the society of his family at such a time, had returned from the church door to town,—she spoke out: upbraided the peremptory temper of Mrs. Armytage as having silenced the complaints and stifled the confidence of Sophia: upbraided the despotic dealing which had bowed so frail a flower to the dust. The entreaties of Lord and Lady Rotherham could not silence the outpouring of her grief. She felt that her friend

had been sacrificed: she said so; she would not recant. Many months before, Sophia had admitted her earnest desire to quit Holywell "for change of air and scene, 'ere it was too late;" but only a few weeks since, only since her arrival at Clifton, she had written confidentially to her friend,—"I am dying!—dying of *misery*. The iron has entered into my soul; and all the exertions I feel it my duty to make, avail not to heal the wound. I am lonely here, and most unhappy; but I dare not write to my dearest brother. I dread being moved to say something that might excite his feelings against my mother. For my sake, when I am gone, be kind to him; and as good and true a friend to Marian Armytage as you have ever been to me."

With what bitter tears were these lines, traced by the weak, faltering hand of his dying sister, shaped by Arthur. He began to fear that some mystery had been concealed from him. He dared not inquire—he dared

not conjecture. He dreaded lest some unforseen discovery should prompt him to act harshly towards his mother; for she was too much in his power not to have the utmost claim on his generosity and forbearance.

CHAPTER VII.

She's such that were I well assured she came
Of noble kind and noble stock, I'd wish
No better choice, and think me rarely wed.
Did'st thou not say she came from good descending?

PERICLES, PRINCE OF TYRE.

THE scene at Scarborough, meanwhile, was far from uneventful. Five days of suspense had necessarily followed the departure of Arthur, without affording more than the intelligence, communicated in a few hurried lines, written on joining Dr. Grant at Holywell, to dispel the anxieties of Marian; and, depressed as she was in spirits, not all the invitations of the Duchess—not all the importunities of the daughters—could induce her to join the diversions of the Spalding party. It is true that Lord Wildingham, who had made his appearance, according to Arthur's prediction, an altered man, and, apparently, a better and

a wiser, made daily visits to the house of Mrs. Robsey; but, evidently, less for the pleasure of talking *to* Mrs. Arthur Armytage than *of* Rosamond Devonport. Marian had witnessed their first, strange interview, and the singular influence the child of the woods had exercised over the feelings of the man of the world. Marian greatly and justly admired the beauty and naïveté of Rosamond; and above all, Marian's kind and gentle disposition rendered her a patient auditress of the troubles of all her friends; even although, as now, engrossed by afflictions of her own. Lord Wildingham, she discovered, had already found time to re-visit the Grange, but without success. Access had been denied him, on the plea that Miss Margaret was seriously indisposed; and his only consolation lay in the surly announcement of the old serving-man, that "there was no use in coming again, as the family would be away in a few days to Scarborough."

On this hint, his Lordship spoke not, but immediately set off to join his family; nor did

it require incentive less powerful than the hope of acquaintanceship with the Maranham family to determine him to confront the manœuvres of the Duchess, who, at a distance from her thousand-and-one home avocations and schemings, would doubtless devote to the disposal of *his* time, money, interest, and, perhaps, affections, the whole of her own idleness and genius for intrigue. For Wyndham was, for the nonce, the darling one of her children; even Lord Downham, as a mere proprietor-expectant, had sunk into comparative insignificance. But all this, and more, he would have braved for the chance of an interview with a being so fair and bright and pure as Rose—a being so wholly dissimilar from those with whom, for many years past, he had been in habits of association.

His projects prospered less than might have been expected. Miss Margaret's indisposition was apparently of a very serious nature, for no visits were received by the Maranham family; and Rosamond might as well have

been immured in the nunnery at York, so rarely was she descried by those on the watch for her appearance.

One day, however, about a week after the departure of Arthur Armytage, Marian having been persuaded by her mother and aunt to accompany them with her nurse and child in their morning's walk, Lord Wildingham begged permission to join the family party. They accordingly ascended the Castle-hill together; and seated themselves on one of the green mounds of its ancient fortifications, to enjoy the freshness of the sea-breeze, and the diversified aspect of the ocean with its little squadron of fishing-boats, and distant and scarcely defined sails, vanishing towards the Northern Seas. A Leith steam-vessel, anchored within a mile or two of the shore, from which a boat full of passengers was rapidly rowing to land, was engrossing their attention and speculations; when suddenly the shrill tones of a discordant female voice startled them from their observations, and

Lord Wildingham started to his feet, and stood hat in hand,—when, passing between them and the edge of the cliff, appeared the gaunt and epicœne presence of Di Maranham, apparently occupied in bestowing a lecture of no ordinary severity on the lovely girl gliding patiently and submissively by her side.

Mrs. Arthur Armytage, aware of the importance attached by Lord Wildingham to the pacification of her involuntary feud with the family at the Grange, rose from her seat, and approaching the weird woman, courteously accosted her with the kindest inquiries after her invalid sister; and communicated, unasked, the particulars of her last afflicting intelligence from Clifton. But Mistress Di was unappeasable. Readily perceiving that while Marian was engaging her attention, Lord Wildingham had seized the opportunity to commence a conversation with Rosamond, she uttered her replies in her gruffest and most unconciliatory tone, so as to render im-

possible the prolongation of the interview; and, having seized the arm of Rose, bade good morning both to his lordship and Mrs. Arthur Armytage, with an air that seemed to bid them avaunt and quit her presence.

"And who, in the name of mercy, is that masculine-looking woman?" cried Mrs. Robsey, when her niece and Lord Wildingham returned to their seats.

"One of our Holywell neighbours," replied Marian, somewhat disconcerted.

"I shall begin to think that all the old women in Yorkshire are rude and overbearing!" resumed Mrs. Robsey. "This person is almost as abominable as Mrs. Armytage. Pray, my dear, does she consider herself a lady?"

"She is the daughter of the late Sir Wolstan Maranham, and of one of the most ancient families in the county," answered Marian, more sorry for Lord Wildingham's disappointment, than indignant against Mrs. Di.

"Of whom?" exclaimed her mother; "Of Sir Wolstan who?"

"Sir Wolstan Maranham. He has been dead for many years; and his daughters succeed him in all but the baronetcy."

"Sir Wolstan Maranham! Are you *quite* sure?" reiterated Mrs. Robsey.

"Quite sure. He was an intimate friend of the Armytage family."

"And his daughters, did you say? How many did he leave? Is one of them named Margaret?"

"He left three, I fancy; and one of them *is* named Margaret. She is a great invalid."

"But the young lady who passed us just now, cannot be one of the sisters, my dear Marian?" inquired Mrs. Baltimore.

"No! she is only their ward."

"And how old?"

"About eighteen, I fancy;—eighteen or nineteen."

"About eighteen or nineteen?" persisted

Mrs. Baltimore, addressing her sister. "And it all occurred when Marian was about three years old. As sure as fate, Harriet, it is his child!"

"Whose child?" eagerly inquired Mrs. Arthur in her turn. But neither of them answered her question; although Lord Wildingham, who was lending an attentive ear to all that passed, looked even more inquisitive than herself.

"Did you notice her? Was she pretty, —was she at all like the family?" inquired Mrs. Robsey, addressing Mrs. Baltimore.

"Decidedly. The first thing that struck me in the young lady was, that she resembled Marian before her marriage."

"And so she does!" cried Lord Wildingham. "There has always been something in Miss Devonport which perplexed me. I see it now;—it is her likeness to Mrs. Arthur Armytage. How very singular!"

"Not singular at all, if our suspicions are

well founded," said Mrs. Baltimore incautiously. "I wish we could make it out."

"Make out *what*, dear Mamma?" cried Marian. "Do you, perchance, know any thing of Rosamond's birth and parentage? It appears to be an enigma in Yorkshire."

"Ah! poor child!" ejaculated Mrs. Robsey. "I wish I had noticed her more closely,—I have always so longed to see her!"

"And you say that all the sisters Maranham are still alive,—and that one of them is a great invalid?" resumed Mrs. Baltimore, addressing Marian.

"Yes! Miss Margaret, who is a sort of hypochondriac, has not quitted the Grange for many years."

"She has lately, however, been dangerously ill," added Lord Wildingham, with undisguised interest in the subject; "and is now at Scarborough for her health."

"That must certainly be the one!" cried Mrs. Robsey and her sister, at the same moment.

"My dear aunt,—my dear mother, you seem bent on exciting our curiosity!" cried Marian, still more and more perplexed.

"Pray, my dear," enquired Mrs. Robsey, without noticing her exclamation, "do you think by any chance it ever reached this poor creature's ears that you were related to the O'Moran family?"

"I should imagine not," said Mrs. Arthur, musing for a moment.

"My dear Mrs. Armytage, reflect for a moment!" rejoined Lord Wildingham. "Have you forgotten our unlucky visit from Spalding Court? Have you forgotten the affair of Lady Emily Maclaren?"

"True!—now you remind me of it,—they certainly *must* be aware of the relationship. Yes, dear aunt, one day, in a foolish jest, I introduced a person to the family at the Grange, (Lady Emily Maclaren, to whom you took so great a fancy at the races, and who did not wish her real name to be known,) as my aunt, Lady O'Moran."

"You introduced her under that name to the Maranhams? And how did they take it? what in the world did they say?"

"They neither spoke to nor looked at either of us; and from that time there has been a complete coolness between us, as you may have perceived just now."

"I am sure I am not surprised," said Mrs. Baltimore. "Poor thing! They must have thought you intended to put an affront upon them. But how were you to know anything about the matter?"

"How am I ever to learn, unless you explain it to me? What *does* all this mystery mean? What can you know,—what can you have ever known, about persons living so remote from your own sphere, as these old ladies?"

"Remote enough of late years, I fancy; which is the reason we have been so completely in the dark respecting them, and more particularly respecting the poor girl. But I declare, Harriet," cried Mrs. Baltimore, sud-

denly addressing her sister, "I have a vast mind to write to my brother Dominick, who has all the papers, and knows all the rights and wrongs of the case, to ascertain whether the age of the poor babe tallies, and so forth. And it will all be very convenient; for Lord Ballinà never leaves the castle before Christmas, and so I can just put the letter under cover to him. Dominick is not fond of paying postage; (how should he, with his large family?) and I am sure I don't often trouble him! I have written but once since I had to announce Marian's marriage. Have you heard from my brother lately, Harriet?"

"I generally get a letter once in a twelvemonth," answered Mrs. Robsey, without the smallest compassion on Marian's or Lord Wildingham's baffled curiosity, "to acquaint me with the birth of another child, and that his wife is doing well, and so forth. How many has he now? Twelve or thirteen, I think!"

"Lord, my dear, how you talk! You forget

the twins, that were born the same time as my little Tom! *Fifteen,* to be sure! Seven boys and eight girls!"

"What a family," sighed Mrs. Dyke; "and all brought up and doing well on less than five hundred a-year."

"It is a shame that Lord Ballinà has never raised his salary," added Mrs. Baltimore. "Only four hundred a-year for one of the most difficult agencies in Ireland!—"

"Where his parlour window is fired into as often as two or three times in a winter! Poor fellow!"

"And his turf-stack pulled down every week, poor soul!"

"But what has my uncle Dominick to do with Miss Devonport?" interrupted Marian, unable properly to interest herself in these momentous family details. "What does he know about Margaret Maranham?"

"Hush, my love! you must on no account talk about it!" ejaculated her mother, in a mysterious voice.

"You know, my dear Marian, I never so much as mentioned the subject to you in all the time we used to pass together," added her aunt, in an equally oracular tone.

"But *pray* mention it *now!*" cried Marian: "you cannot think how much you have excited my curiosity;—you do not know how warmly Miss Davenport has always interested my feelings!"

"How strangely things of that kind sometimes fall out,—eh, sister?" cried her mother to Mrs. Robsey. "To think, now, that Marian, of all people in the world, should be the one to find out that poor child, and to point her out to our notice?"

"Extraordinary indeed!" replied Mrs. Robsey.

"For Heaven's sake and mine," whispered Lord Wildingham to Mrs. Arthur Armytage, "persuade them to explain themselves."

"Pray, dearest mamma," exclaimed Marian; *pray* take pity on our curiosity. Indeed you may rely on my discretion!"

"Another time, my love—another time," re-

plied Mrs. Baltimore; adding, in a mysterious whisper, "it would not be proper to enter into a discussion of such a subject before a stranger."

"And now," cried Mrs. Robsey, rising from her seat, "we must be making the best of our way homewards. Poor dear Dyke will be wanting his luncheon; and unless I am there, to mix his Madeira and water, he eats nothing."

Do not allow them to drop the subject," said Lord Wildingham to Marian, as they descended the hill together. "Pray remember that I rely upon you for the *éclaircissement* of a thousand doubts and difficulties. I will call upon you at an early hour to-morrow. By that time you will have managed to obtain some explanation?"

"I hope so," was her reply. "Believe me, I am as much interested in the subject as yourself."

"I rather think not," replied Lord Wildingham, smiling significantly; "but I have all possible reliance on your good nature."

CHAPTER XI.

Les circonstances ne font rien ;—le caractère fait tout.
BENJAMIN CONSTANT.

BUT Marian's thoughts and cares were about to be diverted into a very different channel. On their arrival at home, instead of interesting herself in the state of Mr. Dyke Robsey's appetite, her attention was arrested by a letter lying on her table, in Arthur's handwriting; a letter with a black seal, announcing his own wretchedness and their mutual bereavement. Sophia was gone from them for ever!

And this was Marian's first familiarization with the pangs arising from such a state! Hitherto her happy circle of family affections had remained sacred and unbroken; she knew not of death or of the grave, save as the general doom, the eventual and far-off sentence of

frail mortality. But the lesson—the fearful home-withering knowledge—was come at last; and the dearest and best,—the young and fairest was the first to be called away. She should see *her* no more, from whose lips she had culled precepts of wisdom, words of consolation. That voice was silenced for ever, whose soft endearments had seemed to render the lofty chambers of Holywell less dreary; and the one flower,—the one frail flower which had ventured to spring beneath the inauspicious influence of the frowns of Mrs. Armytage, was withered into nothingness. All henceforth was desolation in the prospect! The mild mediator was departed. Little Harriet had lost her gentle champion, Arthur his pacificator, Marian her friend. What wonder that her tears should fall,—for her child—for her husband—for herself!

Her kindly-natured companions were far from jealous of her grief. Right well did they understand that their Marian must be deeply touched by her own and her husband's loss.

They even mourned, themselves, that one so good and unoffending should have been so early called away; one who had been a friend to their dear girl in troubles of her own; one who had won even the rough heart and careless eye of Jack Baltimore, by her courtesy of nature. Poor Sophia Armytage—*who* did not mourn for her?—*Who* did not feel that in her they had lost a friend?

Arthur's letter, written under all the heart-rending poignancy of his first bursts of grief, contained little more than the intelligence of his sister's death. The following day brought particulars; the day again following, an admission of his discontents against his mother; his dissatisfaction that he had not been earlier summoned,—his belief that Sophia had been harshly dealt with. At first, he had announced to Marian that the funeral would take place at Holywell, and begged her to hold herself in readiness to join them there, as it was his desire that his wife should pay the last respect of following his sister's remains to the grave—

a desire in which Marian heartily acquiesced. But he was soon forced to inform her that Mrs. Armytage decreed it otherwise, and that she had even expressed a positive interdiction.

"Well, never mind, my dear child,—do not cry, and never mind!"—expostulated her mother and aunt. "Let us forgive her for thwarting you in this particular; since she has condescended to consent that you should pass the winter with us in town." And Marian *did* suspend her tears; for her last letters from Arthur conveyed the intelligence that, immediately after the melancholy ceremony at Holywell, he would rejoin her at Scarborough.

But when he made his appearance, how unlike his former self! Haggard, broken-hearted, haunted by agonizing reminiscences, and above all, by the painful conviction, that he had not sufficiently interfered to screen his patient, submissive sister, from the despotism of his mother, Arthur could not forgive himself. His feelings became now for the first time really

embittered against Mrs. Armytage. All that Lady Laura had betrayed or urged, produced a fearful effect in his bosom. All that he knew, all that he apprehended of his mother's undue control over the destinies of Sophia—of Sophia, her victim,—of Sophia, whom her imperious egotism had consigned to the grave,—filled him with horror and disgust. The Robseys and Baltimores had prepared themselves to find him dejected and unhappy; they were almost terrified to see him so fearfully excited. But warm-hearted people as they were, not one of them but entered kindly and affectionately into his feelings.

How much more, then, into those of their dear Marian, on perusing that last farewell letter, traced by Sophia Armytage with a faltering, feeble, dying hand; replete with the kindest instructions, the fondest care for her happiness, the most yearning tenderness for her little nieces; with indistinct allusions to the arbitrary temper of her mother, and to the necessity that those over whose destinies she

exercised an influence, should not only study her varying humours, but keep in view that they were secondary to the suggestions of a strong mind governed by conscientious motives. She *implored* Marian to be indulgent and forbearing with Mrs. Armytage; to be unto her as a daughter; to be unto her—alas! as *she* had ever been.

Again she entreated her,—and with what affectionate and sisterly warmth,—to put her whole trust and confidence in Lady Laura Greta; explaining in fullest detail the position of her friend relative to Arthur, and appealing to her own good sense and womanly feeling, whether it were kind, whether it were *delicate*, to resent against Lord Rotherham's daughter a boyish preference, long since merged in the tenderest affection for herself? Sophia did not even forget to notice in that last and most melancholy page, the ungraciousness testified by her mother towards the family of Marian. She prayed them to be merciful. She prayed them to be clement; and to forbear from in-

pressing hereafter on the minds of Arthur's children, their own feelings of resentment against Mrs. Armytage!

Who could resist such an appeal, coming as it did from the cold hand of the newly dead, from the warm heart of Sophia Armytage? Her mother alone, perhaps, might have received it in haughty silence; but the tears of Marian and of her family fell fast; and with all their hearts and souls did they sympathize in the grief of Arthur on the loss of such a sister, and promise to fulfil to their utmost, to their very utmost, the injunctions which the dying angel had deigned to unfold. Jack Baltimore was away, to Newcastle races, or a Leith November meeting, or the Fates and the Jockey Club knew where; but his wife and the Robseys promised and vowed, in his name and their own, that whenever henceforth they felt inclined to resent the vagaries and insolence of the overbearing Mrs. Armytage, they would think upon her mild, considerate daughter, and forbear.

Meanwhile the depression of Arthur's spirits was such, as to alienate both Marian and himself from intercourse with their most intimate acquaintances; Arthur, wholly absorbed in his own sorrows—Marian, in those of Arthur. Nor would even the Robseys hear of admitting visitors under such painful circumstances. No exception was made in favour of Lord Wildingham or the Spaldings; the little family party remained mournful and apart. Already too, they were preparing for their departure from Scarborough. The middle of November had arrived; sea-fogs had enveloped the Castle Hill; the town was growing gloomy; the Yorkshire families belonging to hunting neighbourhoods, were gradually dispersing; and above all, Parliament was about to assemble for a fortnight's despatch of business, previous to the holidays.

Now the meeting of Parliament, even for the ceremony of prorogation, was the dear delight of poor little Jacob Dyke Robsey's existence. Not the finest first day's sport of

the hunting season, the noblest burst, the most famous run, was to the keenest sportsman half so inebriating a pleasure, as to him the sight of the Black Rod summoning his Majesty's Lower House to the bar and presence of the throne. On the present occasion, too, the joy of his prospects was doubled; for Arthur Armytage and his wife had promised to accompany them to London, share his parliamentary feasts, and even become inmates of his house in Portland Place. For Arthur was too hurt at heart to be sensitive to the yoke of conventional thraldom. He had neither thought nor care for the vulgarity or impropriety of Marian's relations; and even had he found leisure to regret the occasional flaming forth of their original sin, had too much confidence in his wife's amended knowledge of the world, and acquired self-possession, to apprehend that she would either commit herself, or stand committed, by the folly and ignorance of other people.

In forming these plans, moreover, he be-

lieved himself to be strictly fulfilling the wishes of his mother. Mrs. Armytage had said nothing, had hinted nothing, to unsay or unhint her original expression that she "concluded" her daughter-in-law would pass the winter with her family; and Arthur and Marian did not dream of gainsaying her implied opinion. They felt at liberty to dispose of themselves; and rejoiced that they had found so agreeable an opportunity of employing their disengaged time.

But these illusions were too agreeable to last. Three days previously to their intended departure for town, arrived a letter from Dr. Grant, stating that Mrs. Armytage was evidently impatient of their prolonged absence; that, although she had judged it unnecessary to proclaim her change of views, it was clear she expected that Arthur and his wife would pass the winter with her at Holywell. "Your mother has suffered severely, though silently, in health," wrote the good man, "and is greatly changed in appearance. It is not

good for her to be alone; it would be unkind, my dear Arthur, were you to visit upon her, at the present juncture, any dissatisfaction you may even justly entertain. Take pity, then, on her infirmities of disposition; send your wife and child quickly to bear her company; and as soon as parliament is prorogued, come among us again, forgiving and affectionate as ever. If you feel inclined to be resentful, reflect for a moment upon the void created in my poor friend's existence by the loss of such a daughter; and I am convinced you will not hesitate to do your full part for her consolement."

Nevertheless, Arthur *did* hesitate. The thought of again inhabiting Holywell sickened him to the soul; nor could he reconcile himself to the idea of inflicting so severe a disappointment upon his patient wife. But Marian was the first to urge him to compliance with the request of Dr. Grant; and put forward his mother's claims in so strong and sacred a light, that resistance was impossible.

Appealing to him in the name of Sophia, she cited the words of his dying sister's letter, to soften his heart towards one, whose own heart, alas! remained unsoftened alike by prosperity and adversity, by tenderness or bereavement.

And now, strange as it appeared to people so straightforward as the Baltimore tribe, there remained the difficulty of announcing their intentions to Mrs. Armytage,—the difficulty of announcing that they had resigned their own projects, and thwarted their own inclinations, solely with a view to her comfort! For it was felt to be a difficulty!—She was a woman to whom it was not at all times possible to concede even her own will; unless the compliant could be assured that the *mode* of the concession was exactly to her taste. From Dr. Grant, therefore, Arthur exacted the kindness that he would acquaint his mother with their intention to revisit Holywell, whenever their presence was likely to be agreeable to her feelings.

For once, the answer was prompt and rational. She wrote in her own name, and with her own hand, to assure them that they could not return too soon. Solitude had, perhaps, rendered Mrs. Armytage more reasonable. She wished them to be with her, and owned it cordially. She even alluded, and for the first time with a semblance of real kindness, to their little girl; made many inquiries after her grandchild, and expressed a desire to see it once more at Holywell.

All this was better than Arthur had expected at her hands; and he began to rejoice at the resolution he had taken, and to feel grateful to Dr. Grant for his interposition. Marian and her relations consoled themselves with the certainty that she was doing no more than what was right by her mother-in-law,—no more than they should have exacted under similar circumstances; and a promise was interchanged among them that her visit to town should only be deferred till the spring. Eager to be at Holywell so as to admit of

Arthur's passing a whole day with his mother, previously to setting off to rejoin the Robseys, Marian was compelled to quit Scarborough without even a farewell interview with the Spalding family. She knew from the gossiping of her mother and aunt, that they were still there, grievously disappointed by the absence of the Duke of Wetherby and the Lomax Marscourts (the latter of whom were reported by the newspapers to be figuring in great splendour at Brighton); while Lord Wildingham was said to be off to Melton, and the Maranhams, hopeless of relief for their invalid—to the Grange. Mrs. Dyke, with all her predilection for bathing-places, was forced to admit that Scarborough was empty, cold, and disagreeable; and the moment the travelling carriage of Mr. and Mrs. Arthur Armytage drove from the door, was quite ready to enter her own, and take her departure with little Jacob, her sister, and her sister's little Jack, for what the York paper described as her "splendid mansion in Portland Place."

CHAPTER XII.

Raw damps
With flagging wings fly heavily about,
Scattering their pestilential colds and rheums
Through all the lazy air.

DRYDEN.

GLOOMY as had been their anticipations of the aspect of Holywell, in its altered state, experience could alone render Arthur and his wife fully sensible of the miserable change wrought there by the loss of Sophia. The inauspicious season of the year, the cheerlessness of the weather, contrasted with the cordiality of the affectionate noisy family circle they had quitted, all conspired to impart a more than usually desolate appearance to the place. Mrs. Armytage was looking extremely ill, was silent, sad: no longer imperious, no longer overbearing; but broken in mind and body, a shadow of her former self.

And all this became doubly apparent to Marian, when, after a few days, Arthur was under the necessity of quitting her for town. She could scarcely bear to find herself alone with Mrs. Armytage, the gloom of whose countenance was enhanced by the deepness of her mourning, and the impenetrability of her silence; and when she took refuge in her own apartment from the stillness of the drawing-room, the very echo of her own footsteps along the now deserted corridors, filled her with nervous dread. What a change had been effected in the house within the last eight months! Oppressive as she had found its stateliness on her first introduction, how much more overpowering to her feelings was its present torpor of death-like tranquillity!

Nor was there a single subject on which she could, with pleasure or propriety, enter into conversation with her companion. The past was an interdicted theme,—the past with its reminiscences of *her* whose absence engrossed the thoughts of both. Clifton must not be

named; her visit to Scarborough, connected with her own family and that of Spalding, must also be buried in oblivion. Marian scarcely even ventured to repeat the daily intelligence contained in Arthur's letters, involving, as it necessarily did, the names of Robsey and Baltimore; and often did she sit, hour after hour, in a melancholy *tête-à-tête* with Mrs. Armytage, not daring to evoke the sound of music in those rooms now consecrated by the memory of Sophia, not daring to arouse the infant laughter of her child; but weary of her work, weary of her book, weary of the leaden aspect of a November sky; and counting the hours by every tedious quarter chimed by the gorgeous pendule decorating the silent chamber. Such is the monotony of an existence uncheered by the blessings of confidential intercourse!

Among Marian's causes of discontent, too, existed one, which she could scarcely reconcile to her own belief. The affectionate frankness of her dying sister's letter had opened her eyes

to the absurdity, the want of generosity, the self-committal, included in her jealousy of Lady Laura Greta; and determined her to spare no effort in establishing a lasting friendship with the family so dear to the heart and precious to the esteem of Sophia Armytage. She felt that she had wrongs to atone towards them; and, with her characteristic candour, longed to commence her course of expiation, and prove herself worthy of their better opinion. But it was impossible for any explanation to take place in the chilling presence of Mrs. Armytage; who seemed to have made up her mind that Marian and Lady Laura should never meet alone. Perhaps she dreaded that a better understanding should commence between them; perhaps she was desirous that her daughter-in-law should form no independent friendships; for whenever Mrs. Arthur proposed a drive to Greta Castle (and such a measure without the cognizance of the lady of Holywell was wholly impossible) she too found herself under the necessity of paying a visit to

Lady Rotherham, and never for a moment did she quit the room when these visits were returned by any member of the Greta family.

Marian's health soon began to sink under this oppressive thraldom of mind and body; and having again the prospect of becoming a mother, (a prospect which, aware of her former troublesome anxieties, she was careful to withhold from the knowledge of Mrs. Armytage,) she denied herself the pleasure of solitary excursions on horseback, and found her sole relief from the tediousness of home, in rambling through Holywell park, sometimes accompanied by little Harriet and her nurse, sometimes alone. As often as she dared, she extended her walk into the village; striving to fill, as best she might, towards the sick and needy, the place of the gentle benefactress they had lost.

It was on returning one morning from an expedition of this laudable nature that she was overtaken by Lord Wildingham; who,

giving his horse to his servant, instantly and joyfully offered her his arm.

"How fortunate I am to have met you!" was his first exclamation. "I was making my way to Holywell with the certainty of being refused admittance; for I find no visits are received there at present, except from the Rotherham family. No words can describe how anxious I have been to see you again!"

"Mrs. Armytage is not equal to seeing company," replied Marian. "She is greatly overcome by her loss."

"Natural enough!" rejoined Lord Wildingham. "Having persecuted her poor daughter to death, it is but just that her conscience should supply those pangs which the heart of any other mother would naturally experience. But I will not accuse her now, poor woman, since her day of atonement is come! Tell me, do you hear frequently from Arthur? and what does he tell you of himself, and what of your family? They are all well, I hope?"

"Quite well."

"And the affairs of the nation?—'Well, too,' as says the Thane of Rosse?"

"I seldom trouble myself with the affairs of the nation: there are so many wiser heads than mine devoted to their administration."

"Whereia you show your own to be the wisest. It may therefore be news to you that our unruly kernes of Ireland are likely to tax the legislative wisdom of such Solons as mine uncle of Robsey, for four weeks instead of two. Parliament will not be up, in short, till the very eve of the holidays."

"You do not say so! *Three* weeks longer! How *shall* I get through three more weeks with Mrs. Armytage!" ejaculated Marian.

"A trying ordeal of patience, I must admit. Guess, then, what I must have been undergoing, in the last four weeks of suspense!"

"Suspense!"

"Have you forgot the eventful day on which we parted at Scarborough?"

"Eventful, indeed!" cried Marian. "The

day on which those fatal tidings reached me from Clifton!"

"Do justice, at least, to my forbearance," resumed her companion; "that, being aware how sincere must be your affliction, how different from the self-upbraidings of Mrs. Armytage,—I have forborne to intrude upon you with distresses of my own. You must surely recollect that you promised to obtain for me from your family, some explanation of their mysterious allusions to the parentage of Rosamond Devonport?"

"I do, indeed!—and have to accuse my selfishness in having so ill fulfilled my commission. But you know not how completely my attention was absorbed at Scarborough by poor Arthur's misery."

"I can readily understand it. But are you still absolutely in the dark? Do you know *nothing* further on the subject?"

"Nothing of any interest. Once, when the departure of the Maranhams from Scarborough was mentioned in my mother's presence, I

alluded to her former observations. But Arthur was sitting between us at the time; and she made signs to me to forbear the inquiry. It is evidently connected in some way or other with our family affairs, and in a manner she seems to think discreditable."

"How strange!—how perplexing!" ejaculated Lord Wildingham.

"And have *you* gained no tidings?" inquired Marian.

"None, or worse than none!" was his reply. "From you, who have been from the first my confidante, I will withhold nothing: I am persuaded I may trust to your discretion."

"Indeed you may. Besides," continued Marian with a melancholy smile, "unless I were to whisper your secrets to the reeds of the Wharfe, to whom could I possibly unfold them here at dull, solitary Holywell?"

"I may as well own, then, at once, that I have referred myself for explanation to my father,—Mrs. Di Maranham having frequently

and mysteriously alluded to the Duke in my presence as somehow or other interested in their family affairs."

"The Duke of Spalding? And did he make the same admission?"

"He seemed startled by my allusions to the subject. But *that* he would have been under any circumstances; for my mother has managed to break up so completely all habits of intercourse between him and his children, that he was as much surprised to find himself addressed by one of us concerning any thing more interesting than the state of the weather, as if an ox had spoken. I was even forced to avow the motive of my interest, in the mysteries of the Grange, by way of apology for my familiarity."

"And had your confession a happy influence?"

"By no means. My father asked me in plain terms whether it was my intention to offer my hand to Miss Devonport; and on hearing my affirmative, coolly expressed his

positive interdiction, and without one explanatory word. I suspect the Duchess had been beforehand with me, and worked up his pride and prejudices against the match."

"Do you suppose they have taken up the opinion propagated by the Wemmersleys, that Rose is the illegitimate daughter of Di Maranham?"

"I cannot guess: my father gave me no clue to the cause of his opposition."

"But what other circumstance detrimental to poor Rose Devonport can they possibly know or imagine?"

"*That* I hope still to learn through your interposition. You will do me the very great kindness—will you not—of writing to Mrs. Baltimore, or your aunt, entreating them to vouchsafe us further information? They can have no scruple to communicate with you, by letter, on the subject;—a letter can injure no person's feelings."

"I will at least make the request."

"Thank you—thank you! Pray write by

this day's post! Remember how grievously my suspense has been already prolonged!"

"Certainly; I owe you at least that reparation."

"And by Saturday you will probably receive an answer;—by Saturday or Sunday at the farthest, if you frame your petition in the urgent terms I could desire. May I come on Sunday?"

"We receive no visitors at Holywell!" interrupted Marian. "Perhaps I had better write to you?"

"No! you would not tell me half I desire to know. Pray allow me at least to join you in your walk, as I have done to-day, that we may discuss the thing without restraint."

"*That* might easily be arranged," replied Marian, without consideration. "I walk almost every day at this hour, when the weather is fine: you can come and take your chance. And now good-bye, that I may hasten to execute your commission."

And in sight of the house she paused to

shake hands with her companion, and receive Lord Wildingham's cordial adieu and thanks, careless of the construction to which their *tête-à-tête* might be liable. She even turned, on reaching the hall-door, partly in a fit of abstraction, and partly wrapt in consideration as to the words in which she should phrase her letter to her mother, so as to command an immediate reply; but seemingly watching, till he was out of sight, the retreating figure of Lord Wildingham.

CHAPTER XIII.

Of all men else have I avoided thee!

SHAKSPEARE.

THE second parliamentary sojourn of Arthur Armytage in London was not calculated to exercise a favourable influence upon his spirits. November, with its leaden fogs—its five hours per day of daylight—its twinkling lamps—its tinkling muffin-bells—is at all times dull enough in the great Babylon, and more than enough disagreeable. But now, affording so melancholy a contrast to his recent happy spring, he found the days, short as they were, too long by half for his patience.

The business immediately before parliament happened to regard the interests of a portion of the empire, with the affairs of which the honourable member for Thoroton was at

present wholly unconversant; nor was the mode in which he heard them discussed at the sugar-canery in Portland Place calculated either to amend his ignorance or interest his indifference. The business before the other House,—the house in Baker Street,—regarded only the winter campaign of the Quorn—the Pytcheley—the Berkley Hunt—the Shrewsbury—Meynell's—Jolliffe's—the runs of the harriers—and all other hounds. St. James's Place, with its cordial hospitalities—its simple good-breeding—its happy home-ishness—was closed and deserted; while poor Lord Greta, in his Albany Chambers, plodded through his public business and private occupations, as if life had become a burthen too heavy to be borne. There was not a single hearth, a single heart, a single house to which Arthur could turn for companionship and comfort. The very Clubs seemed deserted, the theatres empty and uninviting; all, dreary and desolate as the state of his own feelings. He felt himself alone in the metropolis.

One evening, however, about a week after his arrival, as he was quitting the House of Commons for the relief of an hour's exercise and fresh air during one of the mill-stone orations of the honourable member for Drawlingham, Arthur fancied that, in a cabriolet which drove rapidly past at the moment he was issuing from the doors, he descried the countenance of Edgar Rainsford. The momentary flash of a gas-lamp afforded him, however, only uncertain suppositions on the subject; and the result was a half-uttered curse on the offender, as he took his solitary way along Parliament Street, towards his Club in Pall Mall.

But the same instantaneous glimpse by which he had been startled, had served also to arrest the attention of his once-familiar friend; and ere he reached the Treasury, a hurried step resounded on the pavement behind him,—he found himself followed—a heavy hand was laid upon his shoulder—and a hollow voice at length faltered in broken accents—"Army-

tage—my dear Armytage!" Edgar had apparently quitted his cabriolet in order to verify his doubts of Arthur's identity, and force himself into the presence of the brother of Sophia.

Arthur's first instinctive impulse was to shrink from the touch of one whom he could no longer regard otherwise than as an enemy. But Edgar would not be avoided,—would not be shaken off; and, seizing his arm, clung to it with a fervour of emotion that proved irresistible.

"What do you want with me?"—demanded Arthur, so soon as he could command the power of utterance. "I had hoped, Mr. Rainsford, you would at least spare me the painful necessity of declining all renewal of our acquaintance."

"Acquaintance!—*Mr.* Rainsford!"—ejaculated his apparently heart-broken companion. "Oh! Arthur!—have I not suffered,—do I not suffer enough, without having to endure these unmerited terms of coldness and con-

tempt? In what light can you regard me, that entitles you to throw from you the friendship of one who——"

"Talk to me no more of friendship!" interrupted Arthur, greatly excited. "Regarding you as the murderer of my beloved sister; my poor, poor Sophia,—I reject all further communication with you of a confidential nature. We must meet in the world; but let it be with the reserve becoming our relative position. I do not seek a quarrel with you, Rainsford. For *her* sake, I should be sorry that our names were brought hostilely together in the idle discussions of society. But things cannot be between us as they have been."

"The murderer of your sister,—of Sophia!" ejaculated the astonished Rainsford, as soon as he could recover breath to interrupt him. "What can you mean? Are you in your right senses? Or what abominable misrepresentations have been made you, to excite your feelings thus unjustifiably against one who would lay down his life to do you service?"

"Lay down his life to do me service!" reiterated Arthur with bitterness. "To do me a service—*me!* No!—it was not to me your services should have been devoted. It was to one as much superior to me and to yourself, as the Heavens are high above the earth! It was to one of whom, God knows, you have proved yourself undeserving."

"*She* thought so; and I was bound to submit myself to her decree!" exclaimed Rainsford in a tone of deep despondency. "Yet why her indifference towards me should entitle you to brand me with the name of assassin—!"

"Answer me truly and in one word," cried Arthur, trembling with emotion. "Are you not married?"

"I am."

Arthur Armytage, uttering a contemptuous ejaculation, forcibly withdrew his arm.

"I am married,"—persisted Rainsford, closely following him. "But who drove me to the alternative,—*who* destroyed my prospects in life—*who* doomed me to a joyless

home,—to a miserable existence? Your sister, Arthur!—your sister, whom I so loved and honoured,—your sister, for whom I had so cheerfully toiled through the heavy labours of my profession,—your sister, for whose sake I so rapturously hailed the first dawning of my prosperity!—For her I would have braved all the privations, all the humiliations of poverty:—but fortune came and I blessed its coming, for I trusted it would secure to my future life the companionship of her I loved; and to Sophia, those accustomed luxuries and honours to which she was so well entitled."

He paused, overcome by his emotions. "But she determined otherwise," he resumed, after a momentary pause; "and God forgive her for the miseries her decision brought on me! *I* have forgiven her, Arthur, *I* have forgiven her. *I* have wept for her, prayed for her, mourned for her, even as I would have done, had she deigned to become my wife!" And the sobs of the unhappy man were indeed audible.

"There is something most mysterious, most unaccountable in all this!" cried Arthur, seizing Rainsford's arm, impressed in his favour by the evident sincerity of his sorrow; and apprehensive of attracting the notice of passengers in a causeway so thronged as the one they were pursuing, he pushed on hastily by his side, till they reached the opening from Pall Mall into Carlton Gardens, at that hour and season, silent and solitary.

"You spoke just now, my dear Rainsford," said Arthur, making an effort to renew the conversation,—"as if my poor sister had refused the offer of your hand. Yet Sophia's last words alluded to your desertion, and were expressive of her forgiveness."

"Her forgiveness? Ah! what offence had she to forgive!" faltered Rainsford. "I, who ever thought of her, and felt for her, and demeaned myself towards her, as towards an angel!"

"But your marriage?"

"Have I not already protested that my

marriage was the work of her hands? Nothing but Miss Armytage's positive refusal of my addresses, could have necessitated such a measure!"

"Do you mean me to understand that you at any time actually tendered your hand to my sister?"

"Within a few days of my uncle's death. No sooner was his will opened and duly authenticated, than I profited by my accession of fortune to fulfil what had been for years the darling project of my heart."

"You proposed in person?" persisted Arthur, recurring to all he had gathered from the inadvertence of Lady Laura Greta.

"No, by letter! I wrote a full explanation of my change of situation ——"

"To Sophia?"

"To Mrs. Armytage."

"To my mother!" ejaculated Arthur in an altered tone. "And what could tempt you, acquainted as you are with our family, to intrust your happiness to her keeping?"

"It was *because* I knew her, that I judged it necessary to address myself to *her* in the first instance. I enclosed a letter to your sister; but gave *carte blanche* to Mrs. Armytage for the disposal of my newly-acquired fortune, and asked her in return the hand of her daughter."

"And she answered," interrupted Arthur—

"That Sophia had left to *her* decision the disposal of her hand; that they had other views; and must beg to decline the honour of my alliance."

"My mother wrote you *that?*"

"To a word! The terms of her letter chilled me to the very soul! I have kept it as you may suppose, and will keep it till the last hour of my existence; and to-morrow, Arthur, you shall see it. But I felt then, and I feel still, that Sophia ought to have softened the abruptness of such a letter, by a few words of explanation ——"

"As I live and breathe," cried Arthur, with irrepressible vehemence, "I do believe

my sister never heard of your addresses,—never beheld that letter,—never even supposed the possibility of such a reply! Edgar!—how—how is it possible that you contented yourself with any answer save from the hand or lips of Sophia?"

"My first impulse, I own, was to hasten down to Yorkshire, and insist upon an interview. But I had already heard from Lord Downham a vague rumour that your sister was engaged to Lord Greta; and at that unlucky moment chance threw in my way our old Christchurch detestation—your cousin Reginald Maudsley—who had been spending some time at Holywell——"

"Whose hand my poor sister had just declined on your account!"

"Who assured me that a match had been made up by Mrs. Armytage between her daughter and Lord Rotherham's son; and that his fair cousin (curse upon his impudence!) appeared enchanted with her prospect of a coronet."

"And you believed him?"

"I believed at least that, from whatever cause, she had decided against myself. Arthur, if I could but express to you the misery of my mind at that conviction! I have since had her death to mourn,—I mourn it still! But the pang arising from the first blow,—the first conviction of her ingratitude,—the first knowledge that I had lived and loved in vain was far heavier to bear!"

"As God hears and judges me," ejaculated Arthur, with solemn emphasis, having been wrapt for some moments in profound meditation, "I will never forgive my mother! Sophia dying at one-and-twenty, heart-broken by her treachery! I will never forgive my mother!"

"But what could be the object of Mrs. Armytage?" interrupted Rainsford. "She knew that my uncle had bequeathed me a princely fortune; my family, if not ennobled, is highly honourable; and your mother was never a worshipper of rank."

"In former times, much the contrary. But she was at that period greatly incensed by my marriage; took various indirect modes to threaten that she would transfer her inheritance to my sister, and would, I think, have been gratified to magnify dear Sophia's importance by aristocratic aggrandizement. Yes; at that moment, I have no doubt she *did* rejoice in the prospect of seeing her daughter become Countess of Rotherham. But what a price to pay for the momentary visions of her perversity and ambition! Unhappy woman!"

"*Can* she be sufficiently unhappy?—*can* she be sufficiently punished?" cried Rainsford; "if, as you suppose, my Sophia was as much a victim as myself? Do you indeed believe, my dear Armytage, that the attachment I had been fond to attribute to your sister, remained unabated? Do you believe she still loved me?"

"Your name was the last that issued from her dying lips."

"Oh! God!" cried Rainsford, covering his face with his hands, and groaning aloud; "why was I not there! Why was I not beside her, to receive her parting breath!"

"You were *married*," replied Arthur, with some degree of bitterness; "you had no business in such a scene. Your wife—"

"My *wife!*" reiterated Rainsford: "yes—I was indeed married! And by whose agency? —by whose baleful influence? By the despotism of Mrs. Armytage!"

"Nay," replied Arthur, "my mother has enough to answer for. Charge her not with actions in which she can have no concern."

"Listen to me," cried Rainsford, "if you have time and patience; and admit that I have a right to make her accountable for more injuries than it was perhaps her purpose to inflict. I need not describe to *you* the origin and growth of my attachment to your sister; but I may observe, that if Mrs. Armytage had conceived any deeply-rooted disgust towards me—any reasonable determination

that she would not, under any change of circumstances, accord me the hand of her daughter—she was unjustifiable in admitting, year after year, at Holywell, on terms of such unreserved intimacy, the bosom-friend of her son: when, from the mere school-boy, he had grown into the Oxonian—the man of the world—the undisguisedly devoted admirer of Miss Armytage,—still, however, she welcomed me — still treated me with regard and confidence — still consigned to my elder guardianship the care of her wild and reckless son."

"I admit it," interrupted Arthur; "but even then, her intentions in favour of Reginald Maudsley were no secret at Holywell; and my mother was so accustomed to regard her will as indisputable, that I fancy she considered it impossible for either you or poor Sophy to cherish other projects."

"Nevertheless, I used to seize every occasion of announcing, in her presence, that my professional exertions had no other object than

to enable me to pretend to the hand of one from whom I was separated by disparity of fortune; and your sister so perfectly comprehended my meaning and intentions, that I scarcely believe Mrs. Armytage can have mistaken them. I admit that she did not encourage, but she laid no irrevocable interdiction upon my pretensions. I believed myself as sure of receiving justice at her hands, as indulgence at those of Sophia. Judge, therefore, of my joy, my dear Arthur, when at the close of last winter, I was suddenly summoned to attend my uncle on his death-bed, and found him disposed to make me ample amends for the neglect with which through life he had treated the only remaining representative of his family."

"If I remember rightly, you were scarcely even acquainted with the old fellow?"

"I had never but once been admitted to his presence."

"He was a miser, I fancy, or a misanthrope?"

"Rather, a humourist; for he never showed himself deficient in generosity towards strangers. Me alone he hated, as his natural heir; hated for my miserable poverty, or rather for his own want of spirit to raise me to a more becoming position in the world. From the moment of his return from India, it was his darling project to marry and disappoint any expectations I might have formed, by the birth of children of his own to inherit his vast fortune; but the strangeness of his disposition interfered with his matrimonial speculations. He could never bring his courage to the point of a proposal; never make up his mind to entitle another to a share of his property. Year after year he renewed his plans in some fresh quarter, but always without effect; and he would return to his magnificent but solitary seat near Southampton, from Cheltenham or Brighton, or London, to curse at once the procrastinating temper which kept him still a bachelor, and the nephew who might eventually profit by the defect."

"You were fortunate that he never thought of adopting a stranger for his heir."

"No!—*There* I was safe. The old man had, in his own way, as much family pride as Mrs. Armytage; and his chief incentive to marriage was the desire of maintaining the name of Rainsford with becoming dignity. In the midst of all these humours, however, he was attacked by a dangerous illness; and hopeless of perpetuating his line, by other means, became for the first time desirous of an interview with his nephew. Judge of my surprise when I found myself summoned to Southampton!"

"And when you arrived, he was on his deathbed?"

"Or he would never have made up his mind to form any dispositions in my favour. But no sooner did he ascertain that he had only a few days to live, than a new whim entered his mind, of making me his heir and marrying me without delay. I had not been half an hour in his house, before my uncle abruptly

inquired into the state of my affections. 'Had I any attachment—had I any engagement?' —I admitted myself to be attached, but not engaged.—'Then you are an ass,' was his reply. 'How can you rely on any living woman not to make use of her liberty at your expense?—I warrant you this Miss Armytage (he had obliged me to acquaint him with her name and connexions) 'would run off with the first handsome fellow who offered her his hand and a settlement.' To take my Sophia's defence against such arguments, I judged unnecessary; but simply assured him that I had as much confidence in her regard, as if we were formally betrothed. 'You are either a desperate fool, nephew, or a very wise man,' cried the old man. 'Had *I* been of a temperament equally sanguine, you had not been here to-day; or would have found a cajoling wife of my own whining by my bedside; and a pack of brats bearing my name full of impatience to see the last of old Rainsford!'"

"Fortunately for you, your natures differed widely."

"The vehemence, meanwhile, with which my uncle discussed his disappointments, seemed injurious to him; for from the moment of my arrival, he grew rapidly worse. I was desirous to send for further advice; for a physician, for a clergyman; he would hear of nothing but a lawyer. To make his will was now his only object; and I was forced to procure him professional attendance for the purpose. 'Get out of the room, Sir! I hate to see you stand there gaping, open-mouthed, for what I may leave behind me!' was his conciliatory apostrophe to myself when the men of business made their appearance. 'But stay!—before you go,—answer me one thing. You say this Miss of yours is ready to marry you at a moment's notice?'—'I said, Sir, that want of fortune was the sole obstacle to our union,'—was my reply. 'You are ready, at least, to marry her?'—'Ready and eager!'—'You will not scruple, then, to swear to me, here on my death-bed,

by your father's name, and on your soul's salvation, that you will not play the fool as I have done; that you will not go through the ceremony of mourning when I am dead and buried, for an old fellow for whom you have never cared a straw; but marry at once, and out of hand;—Eh, nephew?—Speak out, Sir, without picking and choosing your terms; and don't dawdle away your prospects of a fortune, as I have done my chance of a wife.' "

"Of course you complied? any man under your circumstances would have complied," cried Armytage.

"Without hesitation! I took a solemn engagement, that my wedding should be solemnized within three months of his decease; and, had he specified three weeks, at such a moment, and excited as I was, I should scarcely have demurred. My promptitude seemed to gratify him. When I returned to his chamber, after he had completed the dictation and signature of his will, the poor old man grew pacified, and in better humour with himself and the world.

It was even thought he might rally; but he died that night; and on inspecting the instrument he had so singularly executed, I found a fortune of ten thousand a-year secured to me, on penalty of forfeiture, if my marriage were not solemnized within three calendar months of his decease; in which case the whole was to devolve upon a distant cousin (whose injurious treatment of my mother, during her widowhood, caused me to hold him in deep abhorrence,) on condition of his assuming the name of Rainsford."

"And did you specify those conditions in your letter to my mother?"

"No: I fancied she might feel offended that a liberty had been taken with her daughter, in bringing her so familiarly under discussion (although the *name* of Armytage was not specified in any clause of this strange bequest), and merely requested permission to address Sophia, nothing doubting, I must admit, that her answer would be favourable to my suit. I held myself in readiness to start for Yorkshire im-

mediately on receiving her letter, and trusted to my own eloquence and Sophia's affection, to accelerate the solemnization of the happy event. Judge therefore, of the excess of my disappointment, of the excess of my consternation, on perusing her cold, her arrogant reply."

"Still I can hardly understand your giving up a point so important, without addressing yourself directly to my sister?"

"Mrs. Armytage's answer clearly implied that she wrote with Sophia's sanction. And then I was deeply offended, deeply piqued; I had expected so different a reception! And when Maudsley assured me that Miss Armytage was engaged to Lord Greta—"

"There, no doubt, lay your real provocation."

"You were on the Continent. I had no one to whom to apply for more authentic intelligence. And when at length I learned from Lady Emily Romer (whose house, as a relative of the Spaldings, I was in the habit of fre-

quenting, with the view of gaining news of Yorkshire,——of Holywell) that Lord Rotherham made no secret of his delight in the intended match, I grew furious, mad—"

"And proposed to Miss Romer, by way of retaliation!"

"Not however without frankly acquainting her with the terms of my uncle's will,—that I was an unhappy, a disappointed man; that she must take me with all the irritations of temper, all the inequalities of humour, to which my position might give rise. She accepted me: and I have no right to communicate further of my history than that, while hurrying through Italy to escape from Lady Emily's interference in my domestic concerns, and my own vexatious reminiscences, I accidentally heard of the illness of Sophia. A vain, a mad, perhaps a wicked desire, to see her again, to implore her at least to compassionate the wretchedness she had inflicted, took possession of my mind. I insisted on returning home; pretended business of importance, left my wife with her family at

Paris, and arrived in England only to read in the newspapers an announcement that I was too late,—that my Sophia was already in her grave. Answer me, Arthur! can I ever forgive Mrs. Armytage?"

CHAPTER XIII.

D'après mon blason
Je crois ma maison
Plus noble, ma foi,
Que celle du Roi!

BÉRANGER.

WHO will deny that the newspapers of this gossipping century, which, like bank-notes, have

"Lent corruption lighter wings to fly,"

are fatally effective in diffusing the idler vanities of life? It is not alone the "leaders" of "the leading journals of Europe" which may be fairly termed the "mis-leaders of the times;" scarcely a minor "we hear," or subordinate "it is said," bearing reference to visits paid or dinners given, but has its influence in causing the little to pass for great, and of the great diminishing the importance.

Day after day, for instance, the fog-bewildered population of the murmuring *grenouillière*

of Great Britain, was taught by the magniloquence of the morning papers to venerate the newly-acquired consequence of Mr. Lomax Marscourt, by the following and similar announcements.

"Much notice is attracted among the beautiful equipages remarkable just now at Brighton, by the splendid vis-à-vis of the charming bride, the Hon. Mrs. Lomax Marscourt; the body, a bright canary picked out with black, and lined with watered silk of a pearl grey; the hammercloth, matching the family liveries, of white, with a rich bullion fringe. A pair of thoroughbred grey horses with plain black harness, completes this distinguished turn-out."

"Among the names left for their Majesties yesterday at the Pavilion, were those of Mr. and the Hon. Mrs. Lomax Marscourt."

"Mr. and the Hon. Mrs. Lomax Marscourt entertained a fashionable party at dinner on Sunday last, at their magnificent residence in Regency Square; including the Lord Chancellor, the Master of the Horse, the Bishop

of Aylesbury, and his lady, Lord and Lady Spunge, and the Hon. Mr. and Misses Spunge, Sir Timothy and Lady Twitter, the Duchess of Spalding, and the Ladies Spalding, with various other members of the noble family of the amiable hostess."

"Among the company present on Wednesday last, at her Majesty's ball, we omitted to notice the names of Mr. and the Hon. Mrs. Lomax Marscourt."

"We understand that Mr. Lomax Marscourt (a near connexion of the Duke of Spalding) has taken a lease for seven, fourteen, or twenty-one years, of Courtierfield Lodge, in the neighbourhood of Windsor Forest."

"Mr. Lomax Marscourt, it seems, is the purchaser of the fine mansion just completing at the north-east corner of Belgrave Square. Messrs. Ottoman and Jos have just received a commission to furnish it in a style of Oriental magnificence."

"The sketch of the "Battle of Bunker's

Hill," now exhibiting at the gallery of Associated Artists in Suffolk Street, by a rising young artist of the name of Cringe, much distinguished by the patronage of her Grace the Duchess of Spalding, has been purchased at the price of one hundred and seventy-five guineas by a wealthy amateur, Mr. L. Marscourt, of Courtierfield Lodge."

"We learn that Messrs. Rundell and Bridge have just sent in designs for the central group of the noble service of plate now in progress for Mr. L. Marscourt, of Belgrave Square and Courtierfield Lodge."

"We have the pleasure to observe, in last night's Gazette, the elevation of Mr. Lomax Marscourt to the Baronetage."

"Sir Leon and the Hon. Lady Marscourt, are expected to take possession of their suite of apartments at Mivart's Hotel (the suite commonly known as *l'appartement des Princes*) early in the ensuing month. The furnishing of their splendid mansion in Belgrave Square

cannot be completed till after Easter, when her Ladyship will open her house for a series of fashionable entertainments."

"The centre box of the ground tier at the King's Theatre, occupied last season by her Excellency Princess Sauerkraut-Fuchsenbuttel, has been engaged by the Hon. Lady Marscourt."

"At her Majesty's drawing-room we particularly noticed the elegant presentation dress of the Hon. Lady Marscourt; a robe of *tissu Memphis* of silver and cerulean blue; train of silver brocade lined with white satin, and trimmed with a garniture of hyacinths *en bouquet*. *Corsage en pointe*, ornamented with a resplendent stomacher of *nœuds*, in brilliants of the finest water. Head-dress, a plume of ostrich feathers, with a diadem of diamonds mounted *en avoine*. The beauty of this striking costume could only be equalled by that of the lovely wearer."

"At his Majesty's levee on Wednesday last, Sir Leon Marscourt was presented on his

marriage, by his noble relative the Duke of Spalding."

And it was, perhaps, the Wemmersleys alone who, on the perusal of all this trash, indulged in the Burchellian exclamation of "Fudge!" One or two may have inquired, "Who is Sir Leon Marscourt?" when the papers readily supplied an answer to the query—"a relative of the Spalding family." "Very true," was now the answer to the answer: "I remember the Duke of Spalding's sister marrying the Irish Lord Marscourt; no doubt this man is one of the family. He seems to be making a figure: we must manage to be introduced to him."

And thus in a short time, the visiting list of Sir Leon and his Honourable lady, abounded in inscriptions of princes, peers, and Knights of the Garter.

But, while the Duke of Spalding was occupied in promoting the dignities of his nigger-driving nephew-in-law, and the Duchess in

promoting the interests of her innumerable *protégés* at Sir Leon's expense, while the Ladies Amabel and Honoria profited by the eligibilities of Brighton, for a little winter flirting-extraordinary. Spalding Court remained almost deserted; inhabited only by Lord Cecil, ostensibly devoted to fox-hunting, and Lord Wildingham, secretly devoted to the pursuance of his love affairs at the Grange. To this pursuit, time, tide, convenience, dandyism, all were cheerfully sacrificed; and finding Mill-Hill put into a sulky state of defence by the Wemmersleys, against the future incursions of the Spalding family, he did not even scruple to sleep at the Blue Boar, on the night preceding his appointed interview with Mrs. Arthur Armytage, lest, by being late at the place of rendezvous, he might postpone, for even half an hour, the acquisition of knowledge so essential to his happiness.

But although he arrived exactly at the same spot at the same hour which, five days before, had secured him an interview with Marian,

he arrived in vain. Mrs. Arthur was indisposed, and unable to appear at the place of meeting; and in her stead, he had the mortification to find Mademoiselle Celestine with a note of apology! Mrs. Arthur had at present received no answer to her letter; but promised to write to Lord Wildingham the moment she was in possession of the desired intelligence.

More suspense — further procrastination — hope deferred — fears prolonged! Was it to be expected that a lover, and of the romantic school, should submit with patience to Marian's decree? No! Lord Wildingham's time was thenceforward devoted to the cold-catching task of loitering in the very neighbourhood of the Grange, regardless of fog, rain, or sleet, for the chance of obtaining a momentary glimpse of the object of his idolatry;—(at the risk of a personal encounter with the doughty Mistress Di, whose dispositions towards the house of Spalding were by no means dulcified by the recent disappointment of her designs

upon the "old Injee gentleman;") and yet he found a moment in every day to diverge from the Grange towards Holywell, and wander about the park, in hopes of obtaining intelligence of his kind confidante. Not having heard from Marian, he would not deny himself the chance of personal interrogation. It never occurred to him that these frequent and furtive visits might be noticed by lodge-keepers or game-keepers; or that he often approached so near the house as to become an object of curiosity to peeping ladies' maids, or prying butlers;—to the spectacles of old Simmons, or perhaps even the telescope in the library-window of Mrs. Armytage.

At length, however, his perseverance was rewarded. After a week's infructuous pilgrimages, Lord Wildingham had the happiness of descrying at a distance the long-watched-for figure of Mrs. Arthur Armytage, and, on approaching and greeting her with inquiries after her health, which scarcely waited a reply, of learning that she had re-

ceived from her mother the desired particulars.

"*Satisfactory?*" was his abrupt inquiry, almost trembling as he waited Marian's answer to his demand.

"I wish I could say so! But you must prepare for much that is disagreeable—disagreeable for me to relate—for you to hear. I am trespassing against mamma's commands in communicating to you the contents of her letter; but I have not courage to withhold information which I know to be so important to your welfare."

"You are acquainted, then, with the mystery of Rosamond's birth?"

"Here is the letter—read it yourself," replied Marian, placing one in his hands, which Lord Wildingham proceeded to unfold and decipher. But his impatience was too painfully thwarted by the illegibility of Mrs. Baltimore's slovenly hand-writing, and the prolixity of her style.

"I *cannot* read it," he cried, giving up the task in despair. "If you have any pity on

me; dearest Mrs. Armytage,—tell me, in a few brief words—who is she?—who are her parents?—what is the origin of my father's deeply-rooted objections?"

"In the first place, she is my cousin."

"Ha! your cousin?" ejaculated his Lordship, too prudent, in the midst of all his emotion, to betray an opinion that a connexion with the Baltimore family might be indeed a plausible motive for the disapproval of the Duke.

"A daughter,—and, I fear, illegitimate,—of one of my Irish uncles."

Lord Wildingham walked on, in gloomy silence. "There needs but one addition to this disastrous history," cried he at last. "Is Di Maranham her mother?"

"Not quite. Do you remember the invalid sister who received us when we visited the Grange?"

"Perfectly; a poor, miserable nonentity, without sense or feeling. And *she*, then, is the sinner! And is poor Rose aware of all these miseries?"

"Of Rose, my mother knows, of course, far less than we do, having seen her for the first and last time that day at Scarborough Castle."

"Would to Heaven we had all been millions of miles distant! But for that unlucky encounter, I might have remained ignorant of the truth,—married with my eyes shut,—and only discovered the ineligibility of the connexion, when it was too late to repent!"

"I cannot agree with you," replied Marian, faintly smiling. "If you feel sufficiently attached to Rose to desire to have been betrayed into making her your wife, surely your affection must be strong enough to enable you to brave the prejudices of society?"

"No!—Fool as you may think me, I am much too wise to *walk* into a well!—Had I *stumbled* in, I should have thanked my stars that I had escaped drowning, and that matters were no worse. As it is, I must get over my disappointment as well as I can; set off on a tour to Algiers or Fernando Po—

no matter where; and give a new turn to my ideas."

Lord Wildingham tried to speak cheerfully, but the effort did not avail to disguise his deep vexation. All his questions were those of intense agitation; and Marian, replying to his manner rather than to his words, entreated him to compose himself.

"Thank you, thank you!" cried he, fully justifying her implication. "You do well to remind me that I am playing the fool! At *my* time of life, and with *my* pretensions to the insensibility of a man of the world, such an exposure is indeed unpardonable! Yet how can it be otherwise? That *I*, Wyndham Spalding, should have escaped unhurt, all the temptations of Paris, Milan, Naples, Vienna, Berlin, Brussels, nay! all the traps and snares of match-making London,—and at the very moment of achieving unexpected independence, chance upon

'a creature
Framed in the very poetry of Nature;'

possessed of beauty without coquetry, naïveté without rusticity, virtue without prudery, talents without pretensions, — that I should even succeed (as I have good cause to believe) in impressing her strongly in my favour,—yet be debarred by untoward circumstances,—by objections which, lover as I am, I admit to be insuperable,—from making her my wife. By Heavens! it is enough to make even a stoic forget his philosophy."

And again, his Lordship's gestures evinced the most uncontrollable emotion.

"Pray, pardon me," remonstrated his companion, "for not seeing things in the desperate light that you do. The connexion may be objectionable, yet surely, independent as you are——"

"No!—I am not independent," interrupted Lord Wildingham, with increasing vehemence. "You are not yet half acquainted with me! I possess virtues to which, in these times, I should perhaps blush to plead guilty. Can

you believe—(I am half ashamed to make the confession!)—that I would rather give up fifty Rosamond Devonports, than marry in opposition to my father's commands. You do not guess how good a father he has been to me,—how generous—how indulgent; how often he has embarrassed himself by paying my debts from his private purse, rather than expose my follies to my mother's animadversions, and the cool sarcasms of Cecil and Downham. I have sometimes taken the liberty of laughing at him in society, lest I should be suspected of so plebeian a vice as filial affection; but to you I admit, in strictest confidence, that I love and venerate my father."

Marian, beginning to suspect, from his strangeness of discourse and excitement of manner, that her companion was losing his reason, rejoiced that they were advancing within view of the house.

"Such uprightness of mind, such nobleness of character!" persisted his Lordship,—"and

such a life as he has led! No one who has not watched him as I have done, can appreciate the patience with which he submits to the undue interference of my mother;—the good breeding, the good nature,—with which he bears with all our impertinence. Not, however, from insensibility. No!—The Duke has a feeling heart; nay, I have reason to believe that he has been through life the victim of disappointed affections."

"He may therefore be the more inclined to leniency in any matter concerning the happiness of his son!"

"On that score, no hope!—My father would not have expressed himself so strongly, without having taken a fixed determination; or have taken a fixed determination without sufficient motive. I *know* the equity of his principles."

"You are resolved to accept no consolation I can offer."

"I am resolved not to deceive myself,—not

to deceive others. All that is left for me is to seek an interview with Rosamond, acquaint her that my hopes are at end; and then, quit this place. May I come and visit you once more, previously to my departure? It is so great a comfort to pour out one's vexations to a kind and indulgent listener!"

"Certainly — certainly. Since the discovery of my near relationship to poor Rosamond, I feel a double interest in the affair; and if you delay your departure till next week, you will have Arthur as well as myself to sympathize in your distresses. I expect my husband on Monday;—you little know with what impatience!"

"Indeed I do! Holywell and Mrs. Armytage in November weather! But I must not detain you in the cold," he continued, perceiving that she had now stopped short to bid him farewell. And, after having gallantly raised her hand to his lips, Lord Wildingham pulled his hat over his face, and with hasty

steps and a gloomy countenance, took his way towards the lodge of Holywell Park. But neither his coming nor his going, nor the agitated interview which intervened, had escaped the notice of prying and malicious observers.

CHAPTER XIV.

Pride, treachery, envy, hypocrisy, malice, cruelty, and self-love, have occasioned, in one shape or other, all the frauds and mischiefs that ever happened in the world; but the chances against a coincidence of them all in one person are so many, that one would have supposed the character of a *slanderer* as rare a production in nature as that of a great genius, which seldom appears above once in an age.—STERNE.

On the following day, when Mrs. Armytage, by a system of personal ungraciousness overpowering to a nature so timid as that of Marian, had contrived to take her airing to Greta Castle, leaving her daughter-in-law at home, Mrs. Arthur was agreeably surprised to find Dr. Grant enter the library, where she was amusing herself with a book, while little Harriet rolled on the floor at her feet.

"How kind of you to come and see me!" she cried, rising to welcome the revered friend of the family. "But perhaps you expected

to find Mrs. Armytage? She is gone to visit Lady Rotherham."

"I know it. I met the carriage near the lodge. I came to see *you*," he replied, taking an unoffered seat by her side;—"to see you, and to scold you."

"To scold me? I hope not."

"You used to hear one who was very dear to both of us call me her second conscience. Do you know, I am half inclined to assume some such office towards yourself? Have I your permission?"

"I am sure I need one more than *she* can have ever done!" exclaimed Marian, with tears in her eyes. "And it will be very kind to take as much trouble about a person so much less deserving your attention."

"I must not have you plead guilty too soon," said Dr. Grant, assuming a more cheerful tone; "or you will render nugatory the fine opening charge I had prepared against you. Seriously, my dear young lady (and I *dare* speak both seriously and candidly, for

among the many obligations I acknowledge to Miss Armytage, is that of learning to appreciate your merits,)—seriously, then, I hear sad stories of you! They tell me you have private meetings with fine gentlemen here in Holywell Park."

"If by fine gentlemen you mean poor Lord Wildingham, I certainly *have*," answered Marian, smiling at the accusation. "I have met him twice—and he is coming here again before he leaves the country."

"You make at least no secret of your assignations," observed the good pastor, his misgivings already half relieved by the sweetness of her imperturbed countenance.

"Why should I? What harm can there be in Lord Wildingham's coming here to take a walk or hold a conversation with such a person as I am?"

"In the first place, what do you mean by '*such* a person?'"

"I mean, a married woman,—a mother,—one who thinks and intends no wrong. Sup-

posing Lord Wildingham, indeed, had been seen with some pretty girl, some ——"

"You mean, in short, that 'to the pure all things are pure,'" interrupted Dr. Grant, smiling at her simplicity and humble appreciation of her own attractions. "But beware! However pure your own intentions, —your own character,—Lord Wildingham is a libertine, and of such people the world delights in making evil inferences."

"Mr. Wemmersley delights in making evil inferences! I am sure you heard all this nonsense from Mr. Wemmersley," said Marian.

"Not from him alone; or I should hardly consider it worth a thought. The circumstances to which I allude have attracted the notice of persons whose scrutiny and reports are more to be dreaded—of servants—of the gossips of the village. They know your husband to be absent,—they know you to be young and pretty;—and forming conclusions from all this, have framed a romance which it

would grieve me much should reach the ears of Mrs. Armytage."

"I wish I were at liberty to acquaint you with the real motive of Lord Wildingham's visit!" cried Marian, caring more for the good opinion of Dr. Grant than for the displeasure of Mrs. Armytage. "When I see him again, I will beg permission to take you into our confidence."

"I would far rather he did *not* come again, or at least not till my friend Arthur returns from London. Your husband will be here next week."

"But Lord Wildingham will, I fear, have left Yorkshire by that time!" said Marian, with a deep sigh.

"I am heartily glad he is going!" observed the doctor. "He has been here too long already."

"Indeed I fear so!" responded Mrs. Arthur Armytage. "But it is too late to think of that now. The mischief is done."

"Not altogether too late," cried Dr. Grant,

looking at her with amazement, and referring her expressions to herself. "You *must* promise me that you will have no more clandestine meetings before his departure!"

"Indeed—indeed I cannot! If you did but know how grievously poor Lord Wildingham's feelings are affected, you would not ask it. His only consolation consists in an occasional conversation with *me*; it is not much to accord, and I cannot answer it to myself to refuse the concession."

Dr. Grant drew his chair further off. "I am disappointed!" said he gravely. "I *did* hope that the glaring impropriety of such proceedings, once pointed out by a person who has only your happiness and respectability at heart,—who has no prejudices to warp his feelings against you,—the father of daughters, —the confidential friend of that angelic sister by whom you were so tenderly beloved,—you would have desisted. I am disappointed!"

"My dear Dr. Grant!" exclaimed Marian, almost in tears, "is it possible that you see

any thing so important in this silly affair? Is it possible that ——" But to proceed was out of the question. The Vicar of Holywell was not the only person who had descried Mrs. Armytage alone in her carriage, and hastened to take advantage of her absence to penetrate the now sealed portal. Mr. Wemmersley here made his most inopportune appearance; and Marian had the dissatisfaction to discern from his inquiries, suggestions, and inuendoes, that Lord Wildingham's visits to Holywell Park were affording ample food to his slanderous propensities.

"I suppose we shall have Armytage down in a day or two?" he demanded, in a tone that seemed intended to give rather than require information. "I met Lord Rotherham and his daughter riding on the Wolverfield Road yesterday; and Lady Laura assured me we might expect our friend Arthur on Friday or Saturday."

Marian, without even changing colour,—for

she was now proof against all insinuations respecting Lady Laura Greta, — simply replied, "Then, rely upon it, he will come! Arthur is in daily communication with his friend Lord Greta, who has doubtless written word of my husband's intentions."

"What a relief it will be to you to have him here again!" exclaimed Wemmersley, with a malicious glance at her countenance. "Your time must have passed so *very* heavily;—you must have found yourself so *very* lonely!"

"We have no right to expect cheerfulness in this house, at present," replied Marian with firmness. "But you perceive that Dr. Grant has not abandoned us;—we sometimes see our friends from Greta Castle;—I have had frequent visits from Lord Wildingham;—and in fact it is only our mere acquaintances who are excluded from Holywell."

The doctor was better pleased with the explicitness with which his fair penitent alluded to Lord Wildingham's visits, than with the

hard hit at Wemmersley, which concluded her reply; for the angry man immediately retorted with—

"Visits from Wildingham? Aha! That accounts for his lordship's extreme anxiety to make an inn of my house; failing which gracious intention, I find he has been skulking at the Blue Boar, on and off, for the last three weeks."

"Scarcely so long, I fancy," said Marian coolly.

"Lord Wildingham must find it dull at Spalding Court, now that his family are absent," observed Dr. Grant, by way of extenuation.

"I conclude the Duchess is gone to Brighton to enjoy the society of the Lomax Marscourts?" inquired Marian archly of Mr. Wemmersley. "I shall recommend Lord Wildingham to join the party! Sir Leon will form so amusing a study for his sarcastic humour."

"I should think he amused himself quite

sufficiently at the Blue Boar," retorted the enraged Wemmersley. "And yet, considering the time of year,—that Wildingham is no sportsman,—and that, if he were, he cannot command half an acre to shoot over in this part of the country, one cannot help wondering what he finds so attractive in the neighbourhood of Thoroton."

"Mr. Wemmersley is not very complimentary to us, you perceive, my dear Madam," said Dr. Grant to Mrs. Arthur, becoming anxious to silence the impertinent allusions of their guest: "He counts you and me for nothing, among the attractions of the country! We must console ourselves with knowing that Lord Wildingham thinks better of us."

Wemmersley was puzzled! He had expected to find himself backed in his attack by Dr. Grant; and at this moment of unexpected defeat, was not sorry to hear the approach of a carriage.

"Pardon me for reminding you that Mrs.

Armytage at present receives no visitors," observed Marian, on perceiving the mourning liveries of her mother-in-law. "Indeed, I heard her expressly mention your name the other day among those of our neighbours whom she did not feel equal to see. At some future time ——"

Wemmersley gave her no time to conclude the sentence; but rising in haste, quitted the room, almost without a farewell salutation.

"You have done unwisely," observed Dr. Grant, before Mrs. Armytage entered the library, "in provoking that man. He may take an opportunity of returning you evil for evil. Beware of him. Even without taxing him as a slanderer, you must admit a tale-bearer to be a dangerous neighbour?"

"But, my dear Dr. Grant, I could only be so cautious and so apprehensive, had I any *real* guilt to be reproached with."

Dr. Grant shook his head. He could not reply, for Mrs. Armytage's lowering countenance was already visible on the threshold,

and although beginning to hope that Marian's hardihood might be that of perfect innocence, he was not satisfied with the result of his mission. He felt forewarned of evil to come, though scarcely knowing from what quarter.

Arthur, meanwhile, was preparing for his return home, in anything but amended spirits. The society of two men, so afflicted as Greta and Edgar Rainsford, in mournful alternation, had not tended to diminish the painful reminiscences of the last two months; while the perusal of his mother's unjustifiable letter to the latter, filled his mind with indignation against Mrs. Armytage. It was clear that she had profited by Sophia's filial submission, on the occasion of Reginald Maudsley's proposal, to reject those of Rainsford without the slightest reference to her daughter. It was clear that the gentle victim's despair and death were the work of her hands; that the prospects of the gifted and noble-minded Edgar were irrevocably blighted by her

arbitrary dealings. The happiness of two persons, born to be examples in their generation, had been wantonly wrecked at the caprice of her despotic temper. Never had Arthur's feelings been so strongly excited against his mother.

In this state of mind, he arrived at Holywell; and instantly perceived, from the mode of Mrs. Armytage's reception, that she was as unconciliatorily disposed towards him as he towards herself. He had scarcely ever seen her so cold—so ungracious. He discerned, too, in the overflowing joy of Marian's welcome, how painfully she had been passing the time of his absence—how much she had needed a champion—how much a comforter.

Yet nothing could induce his wife to utter one unkind—one accusing word! In vain did Arthur interrogate her with leading questions; Marian would not admit that she had been ill-used or unhappy.

"Poor Mrs. Armytage is just now so greatly to be pitied," was her reply to all his inquiries, "that she has a claim upon our utmost indulgence. Let us remember her afflictions—*not* advert to her failings."

CHAPTER XVI.

O mother, mother!
What have you done? Behold the Heavens do ope',
The Gods look down, and this unnatural scene
They laugh at!

SHAKSPEARE.

ARTHUR had, luckily, so timed his arrival that the ceremonial of dinner broke through, [in some degree, the still weightier ceremonial of conversation between persons suffering under the constraint arising from mutual dissatisfaction. The mere routine of "Shall] I give you some mutton?—Do you take sherry or madeira?" forms a welcome interruption to the meditations of those who, having much to say, yet dare not give it utterance. Politics, too, served their usual turn in the dining-room. Arthur, fortunately, found an infinite deal of nothing to communicate, which he had recently heard put forth beneath the senatorial

roof, touching the malignant state of public feeling in Ireland, and the benignant intentions of government; even without alluding to the duodecimo speech of little Dyke Robsey, touching *his* peculiar project of Hibernian reform, by laying down railroads across the Bog of Allen and the houseless wilds of Connemara.

But all his attempts to beguile Mrs. Armytage into a more conversible humour were unavailing. Her replies were as oracular as they were uncivil; and every monosyllable seemed studiously intended to bring his remarks to a full stop, in order to break forth on some topic of her own selection. Arthur and Marian, meanwhile, sat forming unpleasant conjectures as to the nature of the subject that required to be ushered in with a degree of mystery and majesty rivalling the overture of the Freischutz.

Tea passed, however, without further explanation; and Mrs. Arthur was beginning to hope that they might at least get through

that first evening without an explosion. But her husband, who, having a communication to make on the morrow with his solicitors in town, judged it unnecessary to defer certain inquiries of his mother, touching the valuation of his sister's personal property, indispensable in order to obtain probate of her will, at length hazarded a few questions to Mrs. Armytage, which she chose to construe into a personal offence. "She had expressed," she said, "in the first instance her determination not to concern herself in a matter from the administration of which she had been pointedly excluded by her daughter; and considered all further reference to herself an insult." Arthur's reply was respectful but firm. The inquiries he had made respecting the value of poor Sophia's jewels were such as she alone could answer, and such as his lawyers had judged important to the completion of their duty. He regretted to harass her—he regretted to distress her feelings; but since she wished to resist all reference, he must cause

the estimates to be made by professional persons.

"No doubt you will!" was the wayward woman's rejoinder. "I should recommend for the office your friend and ally, Mr. Gumption, of Thoroton. It will be but one offence more against the decencies of your mother's roof,—one more degradation of your family and fame."

Arthur was wisely silent; for he saw nothing in so unjustifiable an attack demanding a reply. But Mrs. Armytage would not be so evaded.

"Understand, however,"—she resumed,—"that there are certain humiliations to which I am not disposed to submit. You, from motives of your own, may think proper to court the corrupt society of the Spaldings, regardless of the light in which such a dereliction from the principles of your family may place you in the eyes of the world. On such points, thank Heaven, I feel differently. I do not choose the reputation of my house to be compromised by the secret connexions of

my son or my son's wife with a flippant libertine. Even though a peer of the realm, I do not choose my neighbours and tenants to be scandalized by the indecent familiarities of a Mrs. Arthur Armytage with a titled coxcomb, while residing at Holywell."

Arthur's lips grew white with rage, and involuntarily he clenched his hands; while Marian, trembling in her chair, knew not to which party to turn for justification.

"I can well understand,"—pursued Mrs. Armytage, too much excited to notice the gestures of either,—"that such proceedings may be strictly in accordance with the principles of the pupil of a Lady Emily Maclaren, or Arabella Quin,—or that the daughter of a Mr. Baltimore may discern nothing contrary to the proprieties of life, in clandestine walks and assignations; but——"

"Stop!" cried Arthur, in a hoarse but imperative voice. "Before you commit yourself further by these harsh and cruel accusations,

know, madam, that I am fully acquainted with every particular of my wife's conduct since we parted; and that I am perfectly satisfied, both with her proceedings and their motives."

"Perhaps so,"—replied Mrs. Armytage, irritated rather than intimidated by his violence. "But *my* opinions, also, are to be consulted. *I* am *not* satisfied!—My mind revolts from those licences of the fashionable world with which you may have been familiarized by a residence abroad, or by frequenting society so profligate as that of Spalding Court. I beg therefore to acquaint you—"

"Mother!" interrupted Arthur, gasping for breath, but standing erect before her: "You well know in what respect I have ever held your purity of mind and manners. You well know what veneration your blamelessness of life has always commanded at my hands. Yet I swear to you, by all that is holiest in heaven or earth, not even yourself are more incapable of an immodest thought or action,

than my wife. I would peril every drop of blood in my veins on the perfectness of her virtue."

Marian's tears fell fast on hearing this attestation. Oh! how she rejoiced at the circumstantiality with which, even at the risk of wearying him, she had related in her letters to Arthur every particular of her meetings with Lord Wildingham,—nay! even the reprehensions of Dr. Grant! But Mrs. Armytage remained implacable. She was only further enraged on finding her own conduct brought into comparison with that of such a person as Jack Baltimore's daughter.

"It is very well," cried she. "With you or with your blindness, I have no need to argue. It only remains for me to tell you that I will not have the house of my fathers degraded by the infamy of others; that I will not have an abandoned woman follow up her career of vice triumphantly under my roof."

"Silence!"—cried Arthur, in a tone that

seemed to shake the very walls. "Silence—or you will repent this shameful injustice!"

But the angry spirit of Mrs. Armytage became roused to a higher pitch by her son's imperative interdiction. Rising and confronting him, while the glowing blood swelled every vein in her temples, she exclaimed—"It is therefore my command that you seek some other shelter for the misconduct you are resolved to sanction. Holywell is no longer your home! Henceforward, the doors are closed upon you and yours. Sleep this night for the last time under my roof—and, to-morrow, quit my sight for ever! Thank Heaven, there are honourable men of my name and family more worthy to succeed to its inheritance."

"Arthur—Arthur!" cried Marian, flinging herself upon her husband's bosom, entwining her arms at one moment round his waist, and the next frantically placing her hands upon his lips, to impede his utterance;—"Beware what you are about to do,—your whole life long will

you repent your rashness, if you are tempted to proclaim the truth. Arthur, desist! My dear husband! for the love of *me*, for the love of GOD!—Reflect!—she is your mother!—Arthur! Arthur! *Would* you destroy your mother?"

And casting herself at his feet she implor-ingly embraced his knees; and, while her long fair hair hung dishevelled round her pale face, again and again faltered in broken accents:—"for *my* sake, for your own, spare, spare your mother."

Arthur Armytage stood transfixed with amazement. Till that moment, he had not half comprehended the excellence, the patience, the resignation of his wife. She *had* then, from the first, been aware of the extent of her rights, had throughout united with himself in forbear-ance towards her persecutress, without once embarrassing him by allusion to her discovery of the will.

Seizing Marian's hands, he raised her to his heart; and again and again passionately em-

braced her. Her prudence had almost recalled him to reason. But Mrs. Armytage became infuriated by the sight of these evidences of mutual confidence and affection.

"Whatever mysteries you may have to unfold," she observed in a concentrated voice, "I beg *my* feelings may not be spared at the intercession of that woman. Speak out, sir, complete your outrage! As this will be, I trust, our last interview,—speak, before you quit my house for ever!"

"Your house!" he exclaimed, no longer master of his indignation: "It is yours no longer; your rule here has been tolerated only by my forbearance. By virtue of a codicil to my grandfather's will, lodged in the hands of Lord Rotherham, the estate of Holywell became mine on the attainment of my majority. I claim restitution of my rights! Your haughty temper has broken the heart of my poor sister, and bowed her to an early grave. My child has been as a changeling in my house,—my wife an alien,—myself a miserable dependent.

But for Marian's candour, you would have raised between us a cloud of suspicion and discord, fatal perhaps to our mutual happiness. You would have driven us forth to poverty,—you would have made us vile,—you would have made us wretched. But it is now your turn to suffer!—It is *your* pride which must henceforth be humbled; for to-morrow, in the sight of the whole world, will I proclaim myself master of Holywell."

His voice was broken by sobs of emotion. Irritated as he was, Arthur still shrank from the act of barbarous justice he was executing; while Marian, seeing that all hope of concealment was now at an end, sank half fainting into a chair. But just as Arthur was about to fly to her assistance, his eye was arrested by the rigid figure of Mrs. Armytage, drawn up to its utmost height; her eyes dilated, her form motionless, her face paler than marble; and, falling on the ground at her feet, he involuntarily ejaculated, "Forgive me, mother!—forgive me! I know not what I have been

uttering. I am mad—wicked!—forgive me, mother!—forget all I have been saying. Let the past be buried in oblivion. Forgive me, mother! Confide in the repentance and dutiful submission of your son!"

CHAPTER XVII.

She shall think,
Though he divide the realm, and give her half,
It is too little, helping him to all.

SHAKSPEARE.

ARTHUR ARMYTAGE has already been admitted a disrespecter of hours and conventions. It will therefore excite little surprise, that he should be found by the bedside of Dr. Grant at two o'clock in the morning following this memorable night.

"How soundly you sleep, my dear doctor!" he exclaimed, drawing aside the curtains with an unsteady hand. "You did not hear me enter the house or the room, although I was obliged to make some disturbance to rouse up your servant; and here have I been sitting by your side this half hour or more."

"Have you?" said the doctor, rubbing his eyes. "When did you arrive from town?

How came you in my bed-room, and what is the matter?"

"I will tell you when you are quite awake. What health and what a conscience you must have, to sleep so soundly."

"My dear Arthur, you seem in a very incoherent mood; you almost alarm me."

"And so I ought! My dear doctor! I am the most miserable man in the world! I have this night given a death-blow to my mother!"

"I am wide awake now!" cried Dr. Grant, starting up and hastily throwing on his dressing-gown. "Explain yourself, Arthur. What have you been about? What has occurred at Holywell?"

"It is a long story. Some time will be required to put you in possession of all the particulars; but a few words may serve to claim your assistance. Know, then, that for many months I have been in possession of a will of my grandfather Maudsley, bequeathing me his whole fortune and estates. From the first, it was my intention to leave my mother undis-

turbed possession of Holywell for her life, and to suppress the will for her sake. But having arrived here to-day with my mind embittered against her by the recently-acquired knowledge that her refusal of Rainsford's proposals for my sister was the sole cause of poor Sophia's untimely end, I was at length driven to distraction by the cruelty of her unauthorized accusations against my wife. *She* ended, in short, with dismissing us in the most ignominious manner from Holywell; and *I*, frantically and inexcusably, replied by acquainting her with the truth,—that *I* alone am master of the house; each of us, in turn, overpowered by violence of temper! My dear doctor, I shall never forgive myself!"

"I can scarcely understand all this!" exclaimed his astonished companion. "Am I dreaming, Arthur, or are you? Your mother no longer mistress of Holywell?"

"My grandfather's will assigns her a jointure of two thousand a-year—nothing further."

"Can I see the will?'

"It is at present deposited at Greta Castle; and there, Heaven knows, I could wish it to remain. Doctor, you must dress and come with me to Holywell, and aid me in persuading my mother to forget the disclosures I have made. The circumstances are still a secret to all the world,—can easily remain so. It would kill my mother to be forced to the resignation of her rights. For Heaven's sake, help me to overcome her scruples; and persuade her to retain a life-right in the property."

"But you say she has *no* right?"

"No *right;* but I am willing to concede everything—to make any sacrifice!"

"So you thought before; yet you *see* the first ebullition of temper shook you from your purpose."

"But henceforward I shall be *doubly* warned against my own intemperance. Besides, it will be impossible for her to conduct

herself a second time with such injurious harshness towards my wife. *Do* persuade her to let all that has passed be forgotten."

"Do not require impossibilities! You must be certain that the fact will never for a single moment be absent from the mind of Mrs. Armytage."

"Not if she find Marian and myself more respectful—more submissive than ever in our demeanour towards her?"

"She will always fancy you are acting a part, and subduing your own feelings in deference to hers."

"And if we *were*?—"

"Your conduct might be urged by the best motives; but you would stand relatively to each other in a false position; and could never feel at ease. I should decidedly advise Mrs. Armytage, for discretion, as well as conscience sake, to resign Holywell at once to the rightful possessor."

"My dear doctor, how *can* you argue so coldly on the subject?"

"Have you not just assured me that all this mischief has been produced by over-warmth?"

"True! but when an opportunity for a generous resolution—a noble action presents itself?"

"To tell you the truth, Arthur, I have no great opinion of over-strained magnanimity. The vulgar proverb tells us (and all good proverbs must be vulgar) that we should be just before we are generous. Now I admit, that, in the abstract, you have as much right to dispose of your property in favour of your mother, as Mr. Maudsley in favour of his grandson. But you are a married man."

"Marian has been secretly, but firmly, the abettor of all my plans. You know not how to appreciate the noble disinterestedness of Marian."

"And you are a father!" persisted Dr. Grant, without noticing his interruption; "Yours, therefore, are vested rights. In ceding them, you commit an injury against

your wife and children, which I cannot commend. Your grandfather assigned you no discretion on the subject. He bequeathed Holywell to you and to your heirs; and to all intents and purposes, yours and theirs it is, and must remain. You cannot trifle with their rights."

"In short, you will not stand my friend?"

"I would stand your friend in the best sense of the word, not by coinciding with your caprice. But this is too important an affair for me to advise in singly. You say Lord Rotherham is in possession of the will? Is he also in possession of the contents?"

"Not in the slightest degree. I committed the document to his charge as one of great moment, without explanation of its nature. I was afraid he might judge it necessary to insist on the fulfilment of my grandfather's intentions."

"There! you were absolutely afraid of referring yourself to the judgment of your father's friend! You knew he would give it against

you! Yet you will admit that Mrs. Armytage has no stauncher partizan than Lord Rotherham? You will allow, too, that he is one of the most equitable men in the kingdom?"

"I do, I do! But this is no question of equity, it is one of mere personal inclination. If I and my wife derive higher satisfaction from leaving my mother in possession of Holywell, than from taking possession of it ourselves—"

"Every question is more or less a question of equity," said Dr. Grant. "Even to the tenants on the estate, you owe it that they should be subjected to the control of their lawful landlord. The very leases signed by Mrs. Armytage are null and void; and you, as being cognizant of the fact, make yourself a party to the fraud. Even with regard to the satisfaction you suppose yourself to derive from your act of self-abnegation, answer me truly, Arthur, whether a week have passed since your discovery of your grandfather's will, without your having felt aggrieved by some act of authority

on the part of your mother, which, for the first time, you were inclined to resent as an act of injustice?"

Arthur did *not* answer.—"But after all," cried he, resuming his former position, "since it is my heartfelt desire and Marian's, that things should remain as they are, surely you can have no hesitation in aiding me with your influence?"

"I *have*;—I will not stir in the business without the coalition of our friend Lord Rotherham. In matters merely temporal, he is a better counsellor than myself. Let us go together to Greta Castle, and take his advice."

"We shall lose time. In the state of mind in which my mother parted from me last night, it would not at all surprise me, if she were to quit Holywell in the morning; which must be my excuse for intruding upon you at this unreasonable hour."

"We can start at day-break, *before* day-break if you will; so as to see Lord Rotherham at the earliest hour, and be back before

your mother's usual time of rising. Do not return home; sleep and breakfast here, and I will drive you over in my gig, so that no stir need be made in the family. Mrs. Armytage will not even discover your absence."

"Could we not set off immediately?"

"No, no! Submit to be guided like a reasonable being; or the surmises of half the country will be excited, before you know what you are are about."

Arthur saw that it was vain to resist. At Dr. Grant's suggestion, therefore, he lay down on a sofa, though not to rest; and before six o'clock, was again by the doctor's bedside, imploring him, and this time successfully, to rise and be off. The clock was striking seven when they entered the court-yard of Greta Castle, and startled a yawning stable-boy or two with their premature visitation. The name and authority, however, of two such neighbours as the vicar and heir-apparent of Holywell,—the one a member of the Quorum, the other of the high court of Parliament,

availed to procure them admittance. At their own request, they were installed in Lord Rotherham's dressing-room, and his Lordship apprized of their arrival.

On his appearance, Dr. Grant insisted on taking upon himself the exposition of the affair; for he saw that Arthur was too much excited to be particularly luminous or coherent; and after the first effusions of Lord Rotherham's astonishment, mingled at once with regret and satisfaction,—the packet was produced from the strong closet, the seals broken, the deed examined, verified, and read aloud by Dr. Grant. Not a doubt as to its validity arose in the minds of any of the party; and Lord Rotherham heartily shook hands with Arthur. He found no words to congratulate him on his accession to the estate of his ancestors; but many to express his admiration of the disinterested conduct of his young friend.

"Do not praise him too much," cried Dr. Grant, interrupting the eulogium; "or you

will confirm him in an act of Quixotism, in my opinion uncalled for and unlawful."

And, rather to the regret than surprise of Arthur, Dr. Grant's view of the case was fully seconded by that of Lord Rotherham. The latter, indeed, had been at all times dissatisfied with the social position assigned to young Arthur, the son of the friend of his youth. While venerating the better qualities of Mrs. Armytage, he wholly disapproved her mode of dealing with her children, as well as the unlimited authority with which she had been invested by their father and grandfather. The codicil of Mr. Maudsley's will tallied with his ideas of family justice; and very earnestly did he recommend that the law should be permitted to take its course, modified by every concession of liberality and courtesy towards her who had so long and so ably legislated the estate of Holywell.

"Double your mother's jointure, if you will; —invite her to make Holywell her life resi-

dence, and for yourself seek out another," was his lordship's concluding exhortation; "but do not deceive yourselves or the world. This codicil, or will,—for will it is, to all intents and purposes,—must be proved and registered. The great age of Hardywood, the only surviving witness (who, as having superscribed *both* Mr. Maudsley's wills, and probably various other legal instruments, cannot be supposed to have been aware of their contents, or interested in the suppression of this), renders it necessary that no time should be lost. I will myself undertake the explanation and negotiation of the affair with Mrs. Armytage."

"Rather a thousand times, my dear lord," cried Arthur, "undertake for me a proposal that all shall remain as it has been!"

"The time for the suppression of the will is past," said Dr. Grant, gravely. "Once aware of its existence, I am much mistaken if all the oratory, all the arguments in the world, would induce Mrs. Armytage to connive in

its concealment. Much as she may cling to the conservation of her rights, deeply as her pride may be wounded by the notion of derogation, she will never consent to retain her crown and sceptre by unworthy means. She has as much generosity,—I am wrong,—as much *disinterestedness* of nature as yourself."

"I know it!" was Arthur's desponding reply. "Nevertheless, as Lord Rotherham is so good as to consent to negotiate for me, it is surely unnecessary for him to *suggest* motives of refusal. He may make my proposals in the strongest and most urgent terms, and leave me some chance for the result."

"I will execute your commission; but without either expecting or desiring success," observed Lord Rotherham.

"And *immediately?*" cried the impatient Armytage.

"Immediately."

"If you would consent to dress at once, and drive over to breakfast at Holywell? I am convinced my mother will not remain in

the house an hour longer than she can avoid; and if once she quits it—— "

"Well—well! Away with you, and grant me at least shaving-time," said Lord Rotherham, ringing for his servant. "Expect me at Holywell in an hour."

But, although his friendly promise was fulfilled, he discerned by the mortified countenance with which Arthur came to quit him in the hall, that it was fulfilled in vain. Even previously to his own arrival in company with Dr. Grant, his mother had quitted the house; nay, the very carriage in which she had set off for Thoroton was already returned; and with intelligence that, at the Blue Boar, Mrs. Armytage had entered a chaise and four, and taken the Wolverfield, and, as it was supposed, the London road. She seemed resolved to give all possible publicity to her proceedings.

And whither was she really gone? The little council so warmly disposed in her favour, deliberated in vain as to the best mode

of overtaking or befriending her. Her son became almost frantic with vexation and remorse on learning that, previously to quitting the house, she had assembled the establishment in the hall, apprized them that she was compelled to quit her native roof, and taken a solemn leave of the family.

The results, too, of her harangue soon became apparent. Even before Lord Rotherham quitted the house, on his return to Greta Castle, the united members of the household came in a body to Arthur to request their dismissal; and red eyes and heavy footsteps attested the sincerity of the grief with which they had witnessed the abdication of their austere but justice-dealing mistress. The new master of Holywell seemed likely to be left—

> "Alone, beside the solitary hearth
> Where all his household gods lay shatter'd round him,"

with no menial allegiance at his immediate disposal, save that of Mademoiselle Celestine, and Mouton, the Poodle.

CHAPTER XVIII.

Well—well—the world revolves upon its axis,
And all mankind turn with it—heads and tails;
We live and love—make war and pay our taxes;
And, as the veering wind shifts,—shift our sails.

BYRON.

DECEMBER, gloomy December, had now made his appearance in the country, crawling with his usual sullen pace and arrayed in his customary mantle of snow; seemingly unconscious that three families, at least, of the West Riding, were inflamed to fever heat by the unseasonable caloric of family discord; the Wemmersleys raging for the defection of their rich uncle from Carolina, and refusing to be comforted,—Holywell divided against itself,—and the Grange, the torpid, obsolete, uneventful Grange, distracted by mysterious commotions and inexplicable afflictions.

Lord Wildingham was, in fact, less mistaken than may have been inferred, in his belief that his devotions had produced a favourable impression on the feelings of Rosamond Devonport. Educated as she had been in strict retirement, to her his faults were less obvious than to other people; her mind remaining unbiassed by conventional rules or the verdicts of that Lord-Chief-Justice,—the ermine-rolled Great World. Even as Wyndham Spalding,—even as the perpetrator of pyebald English, and the wearer of fancy waistcoats, *she* discerned nothing disagreeable in the handsome young Lord, who thought and spoke her so fair. It was in vain that Mistress Di abused him as a Spalding, or Miss Avarilla anathematized him as a material, unintellectual being; Rose persisted in thinking him very captivating, very entertaining. Deriving from nature (rather than La Rochefoucault) the axiom that old men and young women cannot talk of love without making themselves ridiculous, she had been keenly

alive to the absurdity of Leonidas Lomax's addresses, and willing to resign them to Di or Penelope, as she or he thought proper. Even when Lord Downham, the superannuated Cupid, "came, saw," and smiled,—he did not "conquer" at the Grange; Miss Devonport, seeing him so devotedly in love with himself, could not fancy he would ever sincerely attach himself to a wife.

But when Lord Wildingham, immediately on his accession of fortune and independence, in defiance of the opposition of the Maranham's family,—in defiance of surly porters and gaunt mastiffs, found means to assure her that, although now his own master, he was more than ever her slave, Rose became confirmed in her preference, and made no secret of it to her spinster guardians. In vain did Avarilla rant and Diana rave; in vain did the more persuasive voice of the infirm Margaret, faltering with emotion, implore their young charge to beware of the frailty of her own heart, and the ascendency of human passion. Rose pro-

mised to be docile to their authority,—to marry only with their consent; but she had not courage to deny herself the happiness of an interview with Lord Wildingham, whenever he found means to reach the green terrace sheltered by the feathering beech trees. Her attachment, in short, heightened by opposition apparently inconsistent and irrational, hourly increased. Lord Wildingham avowed with so much candour the faults and follies of his past life, and seemed to attach such earnest hopes of happiness to his influence over her affections, that it was impossible to withhold the confession that his love was warmly and even gratefully returned. Rosamond admitted her promise never to marry without the consent of her guardians; but invited him to wait patiently for a change of opinion on the part of her friends.

Overpowering, therefore, was her surprise, when Lord Wildingham, at their next interview, acquainted her that his father had absolutely interdicted their union. He protested, indeed,

and with a degree of emotion affording ample attestation of his sincerity, that no other woman should ever become his wife, that his prospects in life were blighted for ever; but took his leave, announcing an intention to quit Yorkshire, to quit England, to become a vagrant and an outcast; an intention, in short, to see the face he loved, no more.

Even had it been the purpose of Rosamond Devonport to conceal from her protectresses the results of this painful explanation, the effects of a first affliction upon her youthful frame must have rendered further secresy impossible. Hers was no common, London young lady-like affection, springing up in the hotbed of flirtation, amid the jangling of orchestras or the perfume of forced exotics; cherished for half a season, to be dismissed the next, in order to make way for the prospects of a better match. It was a genuine first-love—the great event of a pure and secluded life—destined, like the poison-draught fermenting in a goblet of Venice, to break the unsullied

crystal in which it was contained. It soon transpired in the neighbourhood that Miss Devonport had been attacked with delirious fever; her life was said to be despaired of; and though Lady Rotherham persisted in declaring that *she* had always foreseen mischief from the autumnal vapours of the stagnant moat at the Grange, the lady-guardians knew better, and had already gathered from the unconscious lips of their protégée an admission that despair was sinking her to the grave.

And now it became their turn to tremble; for, although the iron frame of Mistress Di laughed to scorn all mortal ailments, having survived five falls from her horse, such as might have pounded into dust the Irish giant or Jack Baltimore,—while Miss Avarilla, enhanced in the mysteries of the homœopathic system, defied both death and doctors,—yet the untimely end of the gentle Sophia Armytage was too recent, and its cause too generally suspected to admit of their making light of

the influence of a broken heart. They trembled, but talked long and loudly while they trembled, — scolded each other and all the household, — overcome by apprehensions for the fate of one whom, in spite of all their old-maidenly peevishness, they loved and valued above all on earth.

But there was one member of the family who neither trembled nor scolded, nor even wept, while kneeling in motionless despair beside the bed of the unhappy Rosamond,—yet whose sympathy was of a far deeper nature than could relieve itself in words. The infirm, wasted Margaret seemed to recover vigour of mind and body in order to watch over the sufferer, to minister to her wants, to soothe her incoherence. *Her* arm supported the weary head,—*her* eye stirred not from the altered countenance,—*her* ear was alive to the merest murmur emanating from the parched lips. Margaret Maranham found presence of mind, whenever some desperate crisis of Rosamond's disorder demanded self-possession in

her attendants,—strength to constrain, power to subdue; she thought for them all,—she felt for Rose alone. But, above all, she even found courage to despatch the following letter of appeal and explanation to the Duke of Spalding.

"The Grange, December —, 183-.

"More than thirty years have elapsed since I last addressed you; and at that period a letter from my hand was not without its influence over your feelings. May it prove so now! Changed as we are, may Heaven still grant me the gift of interesting your friendship; for on your will to do me service, depend not only *my* life and happiness, but a life far dearer than my own. Yes! why should I deny it? I am a mother; and I sue to you for the preservation of my child!

"For the first time I begin to reproach myself with the estrangement which the wounded pride of my family first called into existence between us. Heaven knows I cherished no

resentment against you. The obstacle that parted us was as much of my creation as your own; and if the arts of others induced you to act upon the instigations of my petulance, I forgave you, Wyndham, fully forgave you from the moment the world assured me you were happy in the affections of another.

"We were both so young, at the moment of that first attachment: you, escaping the vigilance of your tutor and your mother, found attraction in a giddy girl of your own age, ever ready to welcome you to the Grange, which presented so ready a resource for your truancy; I,—tyrannized by my elder sister, despised by my younger,—was equally touched by your affections. It were vain now to conjecture *which* loved best: who first *ceased* to love is a matter of no question.

"I do believe that when first you assured me the difference in our religious faith need form no obstacle to our union, you spoke in the sincerity of your heart; for, appreciating the strength of your influence over my mind,

you fancied *your* persuasions capable of estranging me from God himself; while I—blind and miserable that I was!—doubted not that my eloquence, the eloquence of affection, would serve to win you into what I hold to be the way of salvation. Perhaps, I might have succeeded,—yes! Wyndham, perhaps I might have eventually succeeded; had not another devoted herself to the task of pleasing you, triumphed in the attempt, and left me *alone* in the world; oh! how desolately alone!

"My young heart swelled within me on perusing your letter, stating your conviction that marriage between two persons differing in the forms of their Christian profession could be productive only of mutual misery; for already I had heard from others of the nets spread for you,—of the gilded cage into which you had been deluded,—that you were prepared to abandon me, *not* for the love of God, but for the love of another! And all was soon verified, and I was left to my tears,—to tears that fell not for the loss of a distinguished

position in the world, but for the loss of Wyndham — the beloved Wyndham — with whom I had so often wandered beneath the spreading beech-trees,—he who had been all in all to *me*, and to whom I once fondly flattered myself I was all in all!

"To my father, the disappointment conveyed by your change of sentiment was of a different nature. Sir Wolstan regarded you with interest as the affianced lover of his favourite child; but, with somewhat more than interest, as the anticipated proselyte of a faith dear at once to his piety and his pride. Your conversion to Catholicism had been sanguinely predicted at the Grange; and what was deemed your apostacy, was now reviled as a crime. Even my sisters, little as they desired to see me attain so eminent a rank in life, mourned over the dishonour that had fallen upon their father's house. And when, after a few years of marriage, of marriage with your Protestant bride, rumours reached us that you were less happy in your house than might have been

expected from its numerous endowments, your disappointments excited little sympathy in the family of Maranham.

"Among other mischiefs with which my sisters did not fail to upbraid you, was the breaking up of my father's health. Sir Wolstan's constitution had long been undermined; and the unuttered bitterness with which he resented the slight offered to his favourite child, assuredly tended to accelerate the progress of the disorder. He took a dislike to the house of his ancestors. The Grange was too near Spalding Court for his comfort; and the rejoicings of the neighbourhood, when sons were born to you, or royal favours conceded, filled him with disgust. Year after year, he grew more morose, more discontented; he was even too much engrossed by his vexations to note that his once dear Margaret had become feeble, wasted, wan, cheerless, and despairing as himself.

"At length, (it was about five years after your marriage, and, when chance had brought you in contact with my family, it was already

triumphantly noted, that you too were dispirited and ill at ease,) my father resolved to remove from Yorkshire to Bath. He fancied the waters might benefit his health; my sisters looked to the gaieties of the place for relaxation; and I, too, was content to quit the spot where I had loved and suffered,—where I was continually hearing of your domestic cares, without the power of ministering to their consolation. I had a friend, an old convent friend, married and settled in the neighbourhood of Bath, from whose society I expected to derive more comfort than from the grudging regard of my sisters.

"Our expectations were fully satisfied. My father's health improved, my sisters intermingled without reserve in the society of the city; while I was permitted to pass weeks and even months at Oakstone, the seat of my friend Mrs. Meynell. My story was fully known to her; and, aware of the blight which had fallen on my early affections, it did not surprise her that though scarcely more than five and twenty,

my demeanour should have been sobered and my prospects contracted,—that I should shrink from a career of vulgar dissipation, and find my chief pleasure in her society. Nevertheless Oakstone was not solitary; situated midway between Bath and Bristol, the house was enlivened by a rapid succession of visitors, by most of whom I was regarded as a sickly hypochondriac, old beyond my years, gloomy beyond excuse.

"Among the favourite guests, however, was one, several years my junior, the son of an Irish Baronet of ancient family, whose broken fortunes had compelled him to seek a provision in trade. From the first day of his arrival, Robert O'Moran devoted his attentions to me; and, with a degree of impetuosity savouring of infatuation, seemed to glory in the display of his passion. Mrs. Meynell, as an excuse perhaps for my coldness, acquainted him with the peculiarities of my situation. But the assertion that I had loved and still loved another, whom, as she chose to declare, I had rejected from a

religious scruple, seemed only to inflame his attachment. The reserve of my deportment, indeed, forbade a positive declaration of his sentiments; and trusting, on my own part, to make him aware of the hopelessness of his pretensions, without suffering things to come to a crisis, I assumed towards him an air of sisterly regard, which I hoped might enable me to enjoy the society of a person I esteemed, without subjecting me to the persecutions of his wild attachment.

"For a time O'Moran appeared to comprehend and coincide in my views; but, during a whole summer, he found unceasing pretexts for joining our parties at Oakstone. Not a wish did I express, but he contrived that it should be instantly fulfilled. The mercantile house with which he was connected, was engaged in various foreign speculations, affording him the means of gratifying caprices, such as I might have avowed in all safety, in presence of any other person. New works, rare flowers, tropical birds, found their way to Oakstone.

In all his words and actions, there existed a degree of romantic enthusiasm, singularly at variance with the plodding duties of his sober vocation.

"O'Moran had given me to understand that he professed the same creed as myself; and the name and Milesian origin of his family rendered this so probable, that I entertained no doubt on the subject. I saw, however, that he was not only a careless Catholic, but a careless Christian,—that religious duties occupied no share of his attention; and, on this point, especially interested myself to obtain an influence over his feelings. Absorbed for years by a disappointed passion, I little dreamed that my feelings could ever change towards a headstrong lover; but after being subjected for months to the devotedness, the disinterestedness of his homage, I found myself the first to regret his absence, whenever he departed from Oakstone,—the first to rejoice in his return.

"At length he discerned,—perhaps at the

suggestion of my friend, Mrs. Meynell, who, aware of my unpleasant position with my sisters, certainly favoured his views, — the advantage he had obtained. He pressed his suit warmly,—generously,—eagerly; and the only objection that presented itself was the impossibility of obtaining my father's consent to my union with a person engaged in commercial employments. 'Your family, I am aware, is ancient as my own,' said I; 'but the prejudiced pride of Sir Wolstan and my sisters will see only the Bristol merchant in the son of Sir Emilius O'Moran.'

"'But you are of an age to judge for yourself,' replied Robert; 'and you are independent,—for, Heaven knows, I seek no fortune with your hand! Give it me, my precious Margaret;—give me only a legal right to call you mine, and let time reconcile your father to the match.'

"To reconcile my father to the match was, I knew, a hopeless project; my father, who had indulged in expectations of beholding his

favourite daughter the bride of the Duke of Spalding!

"At that moment I received a letter couched in no gracious terms, recalling me to Bath. My sisters wrote, reproaching me with my preference for the low society frequenting Oakstone; and I understood at once to whom and what they alluded. Bitter, I foresaw, were the taunts that awaited me; and O'Moran, distracted at the prospect of a separation fatal to his hopes, grew more vehement than ever,—prostrated himself at my feet,— wept, — threatened, — implored, and finally obtained my consent, and the sanction of my imprudent friend, to our clandestine marriage. There was no difficulty in obtaining the services of the priest attached to the household of Mrs. Meynell:—the usual forms of confession previous to the administration of the Holy Sacrament of Marriage, were duly observed by both parties; and, in the domestic chapel of Oakstone, in presence of my friend and a confidential servant, I became

the wife of Robert O'Moran. Five days elapsed in mutual security;—when an angry letter of recall from my father rendered indispensable my return to Bath.

"Never had I found his peevish despotism so hard to support;—never had the overbearing temper of my elder, or the sarcastic bitterness of my younger sister, so overpowered my feelings as now;—when all their insinuations, nay, even open invectives, were directed against him who was secretly my husband. O'Moran and myself had devised measures for a private correspondence, and my sole consolation arose from the power of pouring forth to him the history of my domestic vexations. I was compelled to own that my hope of reconciling my father to the idea of our union grew daily more remote; and when, in the course of a few weeks, Robert continued to visit me privately at Bath, it was agreed between us that, after a month's further attempt, I should avow the truth, and hazard the penalty of my disobedience. Within that

period, however, when approaching one evening to the fatal subject, in general conversation with my family, I happened to allude to the O'Morans as professing the same ancient faith with ourselves,—

"'You either deceive yourself, or you would deceive *us*,' replied my sister Amarilla. 'I have' taken repeated occasion to inquire into the circumstances of the family. The O'Morans are Protestants—Orangeites—beggars! One daughter ran off from Cheltenham with the son of a Gloucestershire clothier; the other is married to a Demerara planter. One son is a refugee in America,—one a nobleman's agent,—and one a Bristol slopseller.'

"'All these particulars may be true,' I calmly replied, 'with the exception of the first. Sir Emilius O'Moran may be a beggar, but he is unquestionably a Roman Catholic.'

"Again my assertion was denied; and in such contemptuous terms, that I resolved to apply to my husband for written confirmation of the fact. But O'Moran was absent when

my letter reached Bristol,—having, indeed, previously apprized me that the affairs of his house would necessitate a fortnight's excursion to Guernsey; and, during the delay produced by this inopportune expedition, miserable presentiments began to prey upon my mind. At length his answer arrived. It was dated from St. Heliers; and the first words that met my eye—'I have deceived you! Forgive me, my most beloved Margaret, for having hazarded the only protest which could make you mine;—I am indeed a member of the Protestant church!' confirmed my worst apprehensions. On the very day the tidings reached me that I had no legal—no spiritual claim upon a husband, I obtained the certainty that I was to become a mother! Wyndham, judge of the agony of my feelings!"

CHAPTER XIX.

And yet he with no feigned delight
Had wooed the maiden day and night—
Had loved her night and morn.
How could he choose but love a maid
Whose heart by Nature's hand was swayed,—
So kind, and so forlorn?

WORDSWORTH.

"OVERWHELMED by the consciousness of my situation — excited to the highest degree against him to whom I had sacrificed myself, as against a profaner of the most sacred mysteries of my faith, it was impossible for me to disguise the truth from my sisters. I avowed all. I threw myself on their protection—I threw myself on their mercy,—and, on condition that I would submit to be governed by their judgment, obtained from them a promise of aid in concealing from my father facts which, I doubted not, would bring his gray hairs in sorrow to the grave.

Their first measure was to return, unopened, the subsequent letters of O'Moran; then next, to procure for me an obscure refuge, where my shame might be hidden, and the pursuit of my betrayer evaded. This was successfully achieved; and my father became reconciled to my absence by the belief that, at the instigation of my wiser sisters, I had resolved to withdraw from the importunities of an admirer so distasteful to my family. O'Moran, therefore, on presenting himself some weeks afterwards at my father's house, for explanation, was denied admittance; and, on forcing an entrance, violently expelled. The protection of the law was at length claimed by my family against his intrusion; till, baffled in every attempt to obtain intelligence of me, he became excited to frenzy,—attempted his own life,—and when, in due time, I gave birth to a daughter,—the child of honourable parents, and yet a child of shame,—its unhappy father, under the protection of his own family, was the inmate of a lunatic asylum!

"And thus, by the blindness of my resentment, I had inflicted an irreparable injury on my unhappy babe; for had I, in the first instance, essayed the effect of firmness, alike with my family and my husband, our marriage might have been legalized previously to the birth of my poor Rosamond. But now, all was hopeless! It had become impossible to break the secret to my father; while my sisters, by the assistance afforded me in concealing my disgrace, had obtained an ascendancy over my conduct, never thenceforward to be broken.

"Miserable as were my prospects on every side, my most poignant anguish arose from the necessity of separation from my child—my little comforter—whose existence still gave me strength to struggle with the cares of life. During the survival of my father, I was able to see her but by stealth, and at rare intervals; yet rare as they were, they enabled me to bear and forbear. My health failed—my strength deserted me—my courage never!

'Trust to us' had been, from the first, the promise of my sisters; 'and at some future time, this unfortunate pledge of our family dishonour shall dwell under our roof, and be unto us as a daughter. Submit to the concealment necessary for the preservation of our credit in the eyes of the world,—submit to let her be regarded as a ward,—an adopted child,—and she shall never want the care of a parent.'

"Sir Wolstan died within a twelvemonth, bequeathing the absolute control of his property to my elder sister; and how could I resist? I had not the means of giving bread to the child. Had we quitted the Grange, we must have lain down by the way-side, and perished together: and for *her* sake I submitted to renounce the precious name of mother; contenting myself to behold her grow up in my presence as in the presence of a stock or stone. She was the darling of every heart—of every eye. All others might love and caress her; *I* alone was obliged to place a restraint upon my feelings, lest the world

should detect that the hand placed in benediction on her head, or the tears that fell upon her little cheek, were those of a mother!

"Sometimes, the very child herself was startled by the impassioned tenderness of my endearments, when for a moment we were alone together. 'What makes you love me so very, *very* much?' she would say in her sweet prattlings:—'Mistress Di pats me on the shoulder; Miss Avarilla places me on her knee; but *you* hold me to your heart. What makes *you* love me so much more than the rest?' At other moments, I felt obliged to reprehend—nay, even chastise the creature I so tenderly cherished, lest the truth should be made manifest. My sisters protested that the excess of my motherly affection was continually breaking forth, and that I should surely, sooner or later, be the means of making known the illegitimacy of the child; they even required that Rosamond should not be educated under our roof,—in order to give less colour to the surmises of the world.

"During the period of her absence, the poor sick, infirm, martyrized being who had alternately smiled and wept over her cradle, bore with the weariness of life in the expectation of again pressing her to her bosom: some trifle of her apparel—a glove—a ribbon—being treasured there like a relique, till I was once more blessed with her presence! And thus, she grew to womanhood; while, every year, my tenderness assumed a more painful development. I began to feel that my Rosamond was worse than an orphan. Should she chance to place her young affections aspiringly, how grievous might be the mortification entailed upon her! I could neither suffer her to go to the altar under a false designation, nor find courage to declare the truth to the man her gentle qualities might attract to honour her with his hand!

"Heaven knows, I desired not to fix her destinies in the loftier ranks of life! I trusted that some humble individual of noble mind might be tempted by her beauty, her virtues,

her accomplishments, to overlook the misfortune of her birth; and when your son Lord Downham visited the Grange, it was my entreaty that no encouragement might be given to the sons of the Duke of Spalding. Lord Wyndham followed—(the name brought tears into my eyes and a pang into my heart!)—and still I persevered in my interdiction. He was denied the house,—avoided,—almost insulted by my sister; still, he persevered. And now came my great trial; for, I perceived that, from the moment of his first visit, Rosamond was no longer the same person. *She*, too, was under the spell of that name once so precious to her mother! I saw her grow reserved, fractious, unhappy; a thousand miseries were preparing for my child!

"It was time she should be warned, and that a moment's present pain should redeem her from years of disappointment. I took her, therefore, into my arms and told her all,—all my sorrows, all my shame! But my revelation came too late; for, instead of the rapturous

exclamations with which I had long trusted she would welcome the intelligence that she was loved and watched over by a living mother, —Rosamond answered me only with the name of 'Wyndham.' Already, I had forfeited her affections. That very morning, they had met in secret; she knew herself to have been rejected by the Duke of Spalding. And the mystery was now explained. She was the offspring of guilt,—despised, cut off, contemned. How could she find forgiveness for her unhappy mother!

"Wyndham! my child sickened even unto death under her mortification. She is still at the brink of the grave! All I have lived for, —all I have suffered for,—all I have sorrowed for,—is vanishing from my grasp! My fair girl—my gentle girl—she over whom I have watched and wept during her sleep, with such grievous yearnings of heart,—is going down to the grave, guiltless of all but loving one who loves her, as once his father seemed to love her most unhappy mother! Wyndham!—

must this be? Is the past so utterly forgotten? I reproach you not—have never reproached you! I do but supplicate,—humbling myself in the dust at your feet,—and praying for the life so far more dear to me than my own! Have mercy in exchange for her blighted youth; Margaret entreats you to have mercy!

"M. M."

The lapse of a few hours after the perusal of this touching appeal, sufficed to convey the Duke of Spalding to the Grange. Nearly thirty years had elapsed since he last quitted it—young, handsome, gay. He was now in the decline of life,—without the consciousness of past happiness, or of prosperity virtuously employed, to brighten the prospects of age; and it was a trying thing for the self-accusing man to hold in his own the withered hand,—withered by time and care,—which, at their last meeting, had been pledged to his by vows of mutual affection.

What passed at their singular reunion never transpired: but on the following day, Lord Wildingham, summoned by his father, made his appearance at the Grange. "If," said the Duke, "your sole motive for breaking off your engagement with Miss Devonport be your submission to my will, receive her at my hands as your wife. Accident alone revealed to *you* the secret of her birth,—it is still a mystery to the world. Let it remain so,—and, should any presume to question the eligibility of the connexion, tell them, my dear Wyndham, that she is the adopted child of your father. I will bestow her upon you at the altar;—*I* undertake her acceptance in my family. Those who affect to slight Lady Wildingham, must display their ungraciousness towards my daughter-in-law elsewhere than under my roof."

Thus encouraged, it is not to be supposed that the happy Wyndham was slow in the renewal of his suit,—thus cheered, it is not

surprising that Rosamond's health should rapidly improve.

Her mother by her side,—her lover at her feet,—the Duke of Spalding, enchanted with her gentle simplicity of manners, retracing in herself all the charms of his early love, Rosamond was the happiest of the happy. Joy prevailed at the venerable Manor. The old ladies had been too much shaken by apprehension of losing the darling of their house, to trouble themselves with the politics or the enmities of Spalding Court. Their triumph was complete;—they forgot to scold,—they almost forgot to prose,—or prosed only concerning the brilliant prospects of their darling, the future Lady Wildingham of Wildingham!

CHAPTER XX.

May ye live
To see another, as I see you now,
Deck'd in your rights, as you are stall'd in mine!
SHAKSPEARE.

MANY anxious hours were devoted, at Holywell, to consultation between Arthur Armytage and his two counsellors, ending in a determination that he should set out, on the following day, to trace, stage by stage, the route pursued by his mother. But the early part of the morrow brought tidings rendering the expedition superfluous. A letter, written from an inn on the road, acquainted her son that she was about to take refuge with her nearest relative at Maudsley Hall, till the law should decide upon their adverse pretensions.

Arthur was deeply hurt. Mrs. Armytage seemed resolved to look upon and treat with

him as with an enemy, as well as to draw the notice of the world upon their differences; to expose him to the mal-interpretation and enmity of their family connexions, and create a party against his interests. Not for a moment, however, did he feel tempted to swerve from his generous intentions in her favour. He even tried to persuade himself that his own unguarded violence, in their last interview, afforded a pretext for her present animosity. But, as her letter expressed a determination to hold no communication with him, in person or by letter, till the great question of the will should have been legally decided, it was the opinion of his friends that he must not at present hazard the attempt. Dr. Grant reluctantly consented to proceed in his stead to Maudsley Hall, and lay before her the wishes and projects of her son.

But at this interview Mrs. Armytage showed herself even more inflexible than might have been anticipated. Although, on hearing Dr. Grant's opinion that the validity of Mr.

Maudsley's will was unimpregnable, even the worldly-wise Sir John strenuously advised her to come to terms with the heir, and take the goods the gods seemed disposed to provide her, she would listen to no proposals of compromise. She had instructed Messrs. Pennett and Nebwell to hold themselves in readiness for examination and resistance, when the will might be tendered for probate. The law was to be her criterion, her Alpha and Omega. Either she would reign by right at Holywell, or set foot within its gates no more. If defeated, she would accept the dower provided for her by her father's vacillating sense of justice, not a shilling more;—not a shilling from her son.

She did not, however, lack discernment to discover the mean-spirited embarrassment of her Baronet kinsman, at being thus involved in family discords. Still regarding himself, so long as Arthur Armytage remained sonless, as heir presumptive to Holywell, it was essential to him, whatsoever king might reign

over the estate, to remain planted on the footsteps of the throne; and very heartily did he wish, and very plainly make his wish apparent, that Mrs. Armytage had chosen to set up her rest on other territories than his own. It was his intention still to pass his Doncaster week at Holywell; and the high-minded lady no sooner discovered his sneaking overtures of amity to Arthur, than she departed for London,—that vast emporium of universal selfishness, where a man's banker stands him in lieu of family and friends, and the ties of consanguinity are superseded by the bonds of Chili and Peru.

Yet, even amid the hospitable courtesies of Fenton's Hotel, came the sense of loneliness—of the lack of human love;—reminiscences of the daughter she had sacrificed—the son she had rejected; and amid them all, the sentence of Messrs. Pennett and Nebwell, of Essex Street, Strand, that Lushington, Swabey, and a whole legion of high practitioners of the black art, had decided her father's will to

be valid, and operative in every point of law.

To the probability of such a consummation, Mrs. Armytage had wantonly blinded herself. Strong-minded as she was, her insane sense of self-consequence had overpowered her usual discrimination. She had not reckoned it among the possibilities of things that *she* could be degraded from her high estate. She had ruled her father — husband—daughter—son;—controlled a parish—influenced a county;—she fancied herself a match for destiny itself!

And now, how pitiful a change! Diminished to that shadow of a shade—a jointured dowager —without a home—without authority—without influence; what vestige remained of all the elements of her former pride! The very domestics of her days of grandeur, too old and decrepit to adhere to her fallen fortunes, had vanished away into several homes of their own, to rest from their labours, and enjoy the fruits of their long servitude. Dr. Grant and Lord Rotherham had mortally offended her

by showing themselves the friends of her son. The Maudsleys she regarded as pitiful apostates: the very Maranhams (and at present she knew not the cause of their pre-occupation) had given her no sign or token of interest from the moment of her quitting Holywell. The whole world had deserted her—the whole world had rejected her. Her haughtiness had met with its reward. She had sowed the wind to reap the whirlwind!

But this was not all. Dr. Grant had not been premature in remarking to Arthur, when addressing him at Scarborough, a melancholy change in his mother's health and appearance. She was indeed suffering from one of the most painful of physical afflictions. A trifling accident, sustained in the course of her attendance on Sophia, had developed a latent tendency to disease; and when the peaceful departure of her daughter at length afforded her leisure to consider ailments of her own, Mrs. Armytage recognized in herself, and recognized with joy, the symptoms of a mortal disorder.

It was at the moment of that discovery, she had written to Arthur in so mild a spirit towards himself, his wife, his child,—inviting their return from Scarborough to Holywell. At this period she did not wish to live. Although nothing would have forced from her lips a confession of repentance, the consciousness of her own unintentional but blamable ministry in the death of her child, weighed heavily on her soul: and neither Arthur, nor even Rainsford, could revile her former obstinacy more bitterly than, in moments of solitude, she was tempted to revile herself!

Till Sophia had departed from her, she had not been aware of half the happiness to be derived from companionship with that gentle being! From the moment of her husband's death, her daughter had scarcely been parted an hour from her side; and though Mrs. Armytage's loftiness of spirit seemed to elevate her high above all sympathy with the timid girl, as the giant oak above all consciousness of the fragrant violet bloom-

ing at its root,—yet now that the flower was withered, the tree seemed desolate; for winter was around its leafless boughs.

Recognizing all this, she had been content to die; but suddenly the scene was changed. Even the indignation excited against Marian by Mr. Wemmersley's exaggerated and mischievous representations, had wrought an alteration in her feelings. The notion that, when she was gone, the name of Mrs. Armytage of Holywell would be worn by a corrupt and shameless woman, inspired her with the desire of recovery. But when she found her kingdom taken from her, and felt herself an object of commiseration to the world, she trembled lest quick-following symptoms of decay should induce her former friends to fancy she was sinking a victim to change of circumstances. Even to the very verge of the shadow of death, she was pursued by the instigations of her haughty temper!

"No!" she would exclaim, as she paced the cheerless solitude of her drawing-room at Fen-

ton's, "they shall not say I was overcome by mortification. Consideration for the feelings of others prevented my disclosing the precarious state of my health, before I was cast out upon the world by my son; I will not declare it *now*—as if to render myself an object of compassion. I will live till the great wonder of Mrs. Armytage's humiliation is forgotten; I will live, that none may triumph over my seeming feebleness of mind! An operation, they say, may prolong my life. A little month ago, and I should have scorned the attempt; but now, existence has acquired value in my eyes. A life of agony were welcome, compared with the certainty that every fool would cry out over my grave,—'She fretted for her loss of fortune, —she had not fortitude to survive her humiliation.'"

Tortured by pain, and still more by the efforts necessary to repress its expression, she rejected, with hourly encreasing bitterness, every affectionate, every submissive overture of her son; till Arthur, unaware of any pecu-

liarly existing cause, at length coincided in the opinion of his friends, Dr. Grant and the Earl, that he should leave her unmolested to recover the effects of the stunning blow she had undergone; then try the effect of a sudden personal interview. He therefore desisted from his importunities—the Rotherhams ceased to write—Dr. Grant was silent. Through life Mrs. Armytage had kept aloof from London and its coteries; and even had she been now inclined to renew the ties of scattered acquaintanceship, the town was still empty—still deserted. She knew no one, was visited by no one. Her medical attendant, to whom alone her afflicting sufferings were divulged, daily advised her to seek the relief of cheerful society, without for an instant suspecting that a woman of distinguished family and fortune could find it more difficult to realize his moral prescription, than his recipes for decoctions of iodine or belladonna; while her lawyer, compassionating his client's manifest isolation, and relieved in his personal awe of Mrs. Armytage, to the amount

of thirteen thousand four hundred pounds and a fraction per annum, ventured to take the liberty of leaving "Mrs. Samuel Nebwell's" visiting card on her table, with an invitation to a family dinner in Southampton Buildings!

It was not, however, these degradations which, in the course of a week or two, determined Mrs. Armytage, without further announcement to her friends and family, to depart for the Continent. She wished to be out of the way of observation,—she wished to be still more lonesomely alone. Aware that the French practitioners are said to exercise peculiar skill in the operation to which she had determined to subject herself, she resolved that it should be performed by a stranger and among strangers. She made preparations for immediate departure to Paris, and, with all her misanthropic gloominess of spirit, it *did* for a moment chill her to the heart, when her personal attendant, she who for five-and-twenty years had been her diligent handmaiden, refused to be the companion of her mistress's

foreign expedition, and expressed a determination to retire from her service.

"I am now alone!"—was the ejaculation of Mrs. Armytage, as she stationed herself on the deck of the vessel that was to bear her from the native land in which she had so long prided herself; the land which contained the birth-place of her fathers, the grave of her child; "alone,—utterly alone; diseased, dishonoured; without so much as a dog that caressed me in my days of prosperity, to follow me into exile!—No matter! the soul within me is still mighty to struggle with my enemies. No one shall boast of having triumphed over my spirit; no one shall boast of having witnessed a sense of humiliation in Caroline Armytage!"

CHAPTER XXI.

Welcome ever smiles,
And farewell goes out sighing!

SHAKSPEARE.

ARTHUR, meanwhile, deeply affected in heart and spirits by the resentment of his mother, had subjected himself to a severity of self-accusation, which appeared unreasonable, even to the most conscientious of his friends. Had he been aware of the *real* situation of Mrs. Armytage, bitter indeed had been his remorse that her fast-declining years should have been afflicted by his rashness; but, as it was, he suffered himself to be comforted by the assurance of the Rotherhams that, already in possession of means to command the comforts of life, and aware that her son had placed under her banker's control half of his annual

income, she would, in the course of a few months, relax from her animosity,—accept the olive-branch so dutifully tendered,—and become a visitor, if not an inmate, at Holywell-Park.

This point once settled in his mind, Arthur had little leisure for lamentations. Immediately on obtaining probate of the will, he had forwarded to the solicitors of Mrs. Armytage a discharge in full of all her accounts,—all her liabilities; and had now only to turn his thoughts to the care of carrying on his establishment on a creditable footing, at a moiety of the former expenditure. Nor did this sweeping Joseph Humeian reduction appear impossible; for Mrs. Armytage, though expansive in her views and prudent in her system, was at best only such a manager as can be found in the best of managing women, obstinately attached to their own plans, yet guided with a thread by the first adroit manœuvrer. The retirement of the gang of invalid domestics, even with the liberal pen-

sion allotted to each by their young master, proved a considerable advantage; for the peculations systematically carried on, under the eyes of those who were blind, and subject to the chastisement of hands that were impotent, became totally suppressed under a more efficient administration.

In the neighbourhood, Arthur had ever been a favourite. His unassuming manners, cheerful good-humour, and filial respect towards the most despotic of mothers, had won golden opinions for him. With the wise, the esteem of such men as Dr. Grant and Lord Rotherham, pleaded forcibly in his favour. With the foolish, the good graces of the Duchess of Spalding exercised similar influence. Marian (Mrs. Arthur no longer, but, in her own right, Mrs. Armytage, of Holywell) was seen to be so pretty, and known to be so good, and afforded, in her unpretending simplicity, so pleasing a contrast to her predecessor, that even Thoroton—factious, discontented, envious Thoroton—applauded; while the ungrateful

parish of Holywell raised its hypocritical hand, and blessed its stars that the tyranny of Caroline the Great was overpast.

So it is in most kingdoms and countries, in the dawning of a new reign! Their Majesties went here and there, cheered by universal acclamations. Thoroton rejoiced to find itself represented by a man with a rent-roll of fifteen thousand a-year, while the high-mightinesses of the Riding, who had never been altogether satisfied with the necessity of conceding a leading voice in the Diet to a petticoat sovereign—a duodecimo Maria Theresa—glorying at finding the pragmatic sanction rescinded, heartily huzzaed Arthur Armytage into their councils. Fortunately, Dr. Grant was at hand, with his prudent moderation, to open the eyes of the young heir to the hollowness of all these protestations—all these proffered leagues of amity.

By a singular coincidence, the fortunes of the worthy doctor himself, or of those whom he loved better than himself, his children, were

importantly affected by the establishment of the will. The property of Sophia Armytage, a third of which she had bequeathed to the two little girls reared in a great measure under her superintendence, had thus been raised from ten to five-and-thirty thousand pounds; nearly twelve thousand of which became the portion of Mary and Clara. It was in vain Dr. Grant protested that Miss Armytage, in making the bequest, had contemplated no such addition; and that, in equity, the legacy should stand at its original amount: Arthur assured him in all sincerity, that had his sister been aware of the real state of her brother's fortunes, and of the rights of his little girl, she would probably have augmented rather than diminished the provision for her *protégées*. His opinion moreover was backed by that of Lord Rotherham, and that of Lord Rotherham by the laws of the realm; and Dr. Grant was forced to see his children become rich, without having compromised, by the slightest blemish, his own uprightness and independence.

Among the families of the Riding, though scarcely one but was well content to exchange the old neighbour for the new one, (the transition having been effected without loss of life or loss of respectability in the family) an indecent degree of satisfaction was exhibited only in a single instance. The Duchess of Spalding did not show herself a generous enemy. Her letter of congratulation to Marian, on coming to her estate, was as exuberantly triumphant, as had been her verbal congratulations to the Dowager Lady Marscourt, on getting rid of her daughter. Overwhelmed by the happiness of so joyful an occasion, she announced her intention of passing a week at Spalding Court, so soon as she could tear herself away from the gaieties of Brighton, and the endearments of Sir Leon and Lady Marscourt, for the sole purpose of beholding her beloved young friend installed in her new residence. And true to her word, she came; and instead of "putting up," as usual, at the Spalding Arms at Mill-Hill, claimed a night's hospitality at Holywell.

The Duchess was in her usual unmeaning flurry of spirits; full of projects, insisting upon being permitted to engage a house for the Armytages on her return to St. James's Square; but finding time to relate, with sarcastic liveliness, a thousand amusing anecdotes of the sudden inflation of Sir Leon's self-importance, his solemn sententiousness amid the airy lightness of the coteries, his overstrained politeness, his misplaced affability, and above all, his self-conceited blindness to the contempt with which his pretensions were regarded by the diplomatic representatives of his own country.

Before she quitted Holywell on the following morning, her Grace extorted a promise from Marian that they would pass a few days at Spalding Court, previously to the departure of the family for town. "I cannot, however, promise you anything very gay or very attractive," said she, kissing the forehead of her fair friend at parting.

"We should not at present feel inclined to

join the society of strangers," replied Marian, looking down on her mourning dress.

"A few Brighton friends, however, are coming to take a peep at our Yorkshire wilderness; and we are to have the Neapolitan Ambassador and his Secretary in a day or two, besides the young Lady Willoughby de Lechlade—an heiress and peeress in her own right—who would just suit me for Wildingham; which forces me to hurry home, that I may be in the way to present them to the Duke. You see I am, as usual, the most *affairée* of women, with the management of half the world upon my hands! Pity me,—love me,—and good-bye!"

But, on her Grace's arrival at home, she had the misery of finding that, for once, her authority was anticipated. The Duke of Spalding took an early opportunity of acquainting her that he had just given his consent to the union of his son, Lord Wildingham, with the ward of the Misses Maranham; and placed

at the same moment in her hands a letter from his friend the Duke of Witherby, announcing his approaching marriage with Lady Laura Greta.

The poor Duchess was struck, not only dumb but still, by this twofold catastrophe! On recovering her powers of speech and action, she showed some disposition to remonstrate against the *mésalliance* projected by her son. But, in this one instance, the Duke was firm. Unaccustomed to exercise his prerogative, he did not compromise his dignity by vacillation, when once his will had been made manifest. He had decreed that Rosamond Davenport *should* be Lady Wildingham of Wildingham, and Lady Wildingham of Wildingham she was to be!

"I do not often interfere with your family arrangements," said he; "still less allow myself to foment discussions, by offering you my advice. For once, however, permit me to become your counsellor. Wyndham is the first of our children to marry. He is of age,

independent in fortune, independent in mind. Do not oppose a choice sanctioned by his father; you will but exhibit yourself to the world in an attitude of defeat: since you must needs accept a daughter-in-law of my approval, accept her cheerfully, accept her courteously; and the people with whom you live and whose approbation you value, will never discover your disappointment."

But the Duchess *could* not, on such an occasion, be discreet. Dearly as she treasured the applause bestowed by society on her talents for management, she preferred appearing before it as a defeated general, rather than have it believed she could sanction such degradation on the part of her favourite son. To dispute with the Duke, whom it must have required a strong incitement to stir up to the exercise of his mental authority, she saw would be unavailing; but she wrote letters to all her friends, sent messages to all her acquaintance, and paid visits to all her neighbours, proclaiming herself the most injured and unhappy of

women; little dreaming that they, friendly souls, attributed her despair rather to the well-judged match of the Duke of Wetherby than to the ill-judged match of Lord Wildingham.

Having allowed her some days to consider the matter and rave out her displeasure, the Duke exacted, with the same mild dignity of demeanour, that she would pay a visit of ceremony to the Grange. But, alarmed by the sudden assumption of will and wilfulness on the part of her husband, against this concession she instantly and vehemently rebelled.

"As you will," was his calm reply. "In that case, my daughters will accompany me, to be presented to their new sister-in-law, and make arrangements for being present at the solemnization of their brother's marriage. Just as I find them disposed to evince their filial submission to me on this occasion, will be their chance of visiting London for the season; I have made up *my* mind to pass the spring at Spalding Court."

"Made up his mind!"—The Duchess was

overpowered by consternation. What might not occur next? To what indignity might she not be required to submit?

All she had recently said concerning the want of tact of Mrs. Armytage, in parading, like Belisarius, her wrongs and disgrace to the contemptuous pity of the world,—all the triumph she had herself betrayed on the fall of her rival queen,—recurred to her mind! Her affairs were not yet desperate. The Duke might soon get weary of the labours of life. She remembered how ably even Napoleon had been documented out of interference in the details of state affairs, by the tediousness of the memorials forced by Secretary Bourrienne on his attention; and resolved, like many an able general, to sham defeat;—*de réculer pour mieux sauter*. She could not renounce London—her occupation was *not* gone. She had still two daughters to marry, —a borough to manœuvre,—Sir Leon to finesse,—and a Secretary of State and a Bishop to dun for the payment of the parlia-

mentary interest expended to secure their own promotion!

She accordingly smiled her sweetest and most mechanical of drawing-room smiles upon the Duke, and set forth, in full state and full submission, on a congratulatory visit to the Grange.

CHAPTER XXII.

Who visits me besides the winds of heaven?
Who seeketh me but the sad sighing breeze
That bringeth to my ear familiar tones
Of voices silenced now, and friends long dead?

JOANNA BAILLIE.

TWELVE months had elapsed from the period so eventful to the little circle we have been describing; bringing with them the usual alternation of shade and sunshine, pleasures and pains. Dr. Grant was now the rich rector of Thoroton, having delegated to an able curate all the emoluments and half the care of the little vicarage of Holywell, over which he still yearned, as with the tenderness of a father. Marian was the happy mother of a son and heir; and the Duchess of Wetherby of a daughter, already consecrated to the memory of early friendship, by the name of Sophia. Thoroton,

proud to learn that its young member (having rejected a peerage tendered through the medium of Lord Armytage) still clung to its representation, the duties of which he had during the intervening session ably discharged, — frowned upon Gumption for his sake, and accepted with thankfulness the munificence of its member ;—Mill Hill, abandoned by the mortified Wemmersley, was tenanted by the worthy and well-informed ex-mayor of the borough ;—the family at Maudsley Hall were fermenting over certain newspaper reports, that Reginald the Sapient had "given his hand at Aix-la-Chapelle to the widow of a Jewish banker, M. le Baron von Periwinkel,— a lady formerly better known to the public as the celebrated Mademoiselle Anatoline, of the Académie Royale at Paris !" Cheered and enlivened by a younger circle, Holywell Park seemed to have lost all its cold formality; while Arthur and his wife, in the congenial society of the Wetherbys and Wildinghams, and the frequent holiday visits of Lords Ar-

mytage and Greta, did not forget the claims of the happy-hearted Baltimores and Robseys, thrice happy in witnessing the happiness of their darling Marian.

Nevertheless upon *her* happiness there existed a drawback. She was now enabled, it is true, to contribute to the education of her sisters, and assign to the use of her brothers the portion bestowed upon herself by little Jacob;—she had the satisfaction of seeing her mother pass her Midsummer days in the midst of her children among the roses and strawberry beds of Holywell, and of conveying her father in triumph to the annual ovation of the St. Leger. Dyke Robsey had realized an additional thousand or two per annum by his rail-road speculations; even Jack had prospered—having disposed of a patent for a waterproof harness-varnish of his own invention, for some thousands of pounds;—while Lord Armytage had procured a cadetship at Woolwich for little Bob; and Parson Longodds bequeathed the savings of his living and his

batting-book to his godson, little Dick. Yet amid all these triumphs Marian found a thorn lurking amid her crown of roses!

Mrs. Armytage was still abroad—and apparently still resentful. The letters addressed to her at her banker's during the first months of her absence, had been uniformly returned unopened; and it was now some time since the slightest intercourse had taken place between her and her English friends. That she was labouring under an agonizing and fatal disease, never entered into their surmises; so secret had been her measures at the period of undergoing the operation at Paris, the success of which had for a time inspired her with hopes of recovery. They knew that she had been travelling in France, Germany, Italy;—and the assumed cheerfulness with which she was careful to greet those English friends with whom chance brought her into contact on her route, had effectually deceived the world;—they saw her amused,—believed her happy,—

and reported of her, on their return to England, as pleased and profiting by her travels.

There existed not, however, throughout Europe, a woman more profoundly miserable than Mrs. Armytage! Broken in health, broken in heart,—repentant, yet ashamed to show her repentance,—unhappy, yet, above all things, careful to disguise her wretchedness!

And yet, though the demon of Pride lingered around the ruin he had made, pointing out with his skinny finger to her apprehensions the contumely of the world, lest happier influences should obtain the ascendancy, be it not supposed that the chastening hand of Heaven had passed so heavily over her head without producing *some* degree of amendment! She had become at least aware of her personal insignificance. She who, with her throne established at Holywell, had bidden "kings come and bow to it,"—who had rejected the overtures of ministers as beneath her notice,—evaded the travelling visit of a Prince of the

Blood,—and bandied scorn for scorn with the Duchess of Spalding;—she who, from her sprinkling of economical and agricultural knowledge,—her familiarity with Blackstone, and her power to detect the shallow knaveries of Messrs. Pennett and Nebwell, fancied herself skilled to sway the helm of kingdoms, and essential to the peace and prosperity of the county of York,—she, in short, who looked upon Mrs. Armytage of Holywell as a portion of the state,—had at length been taught to know herself a speck in the creation,—a worm in the sight of Him before whom kings on their thrones are "altogether vanity."

She had traversed many countries,—countries where not only her name and quality, but even her very language, was a blank. She spoke indifferent French; was unskilled to bend to the usance of foreign lands, and ungifted with that winning courtesy of manner which reconciles all discrepancies and supplies all deficiencies of speech. The people among whom her wanderings were directed, saw in

her only a sickly, hard-favoured, sure-to-please old woman,—travelling with a maid and a courier;—not even a "Miladi!" The very servants by whom she was accompanied, and whom she had hired at Paris, knew nothing of her former days of empire, and could announce no wonders in her honour; and the "*vieille dame seule, en deuil,*" was often thrust into the "worst inn's worst room",—without ceremony and without apology.

On some occasion, when subjected to one of those gross extortions which the much-enduring English discover, after much endurance, to be no longer endurable, she referred herself with indignation to the redress of a local tribunal. But alas! Burn and Blackstone were no longer available in her cause; and Mrs. Armytage, the once mighty Mrs. Armytage, found herself compelled to wait among the commonalty;—to be saucily cross-examined,—boldly out-sworn,—insolently reproved;—condemned to payment, and dismissed with costs; while attendant notaries sneered, and the

rabble hooted in her dishonour!—Her very menials grew ashamed of a mistress, who would not submit to be cheated, as became a woman of condition!

But it was not alone by the insolence of the vulgar she stood reproved; it was by her own nothingness compared with the wise institutions and social advancement of the countries which through life she had presumed to disparage. She, who had been accustomed to fancy that the sun shone more favouringly at Holywell than elsewhere, and had presumed to tax the carelessness of Providence, when her harvests suffered from mildew, or her flocks and herds from disease,—now beheld rising cities, the very names of which were unfamiliar to her ear,—sage communities,—liberal foundations,—to which the puny establishments wherein she had vested her pride were as nutshells on the ocean. She signified her approval,—she avowed her admiration;—and no one cared:—her very opinion was a matter of indifference! The Hospital she commended

had existed for four hundred years, unconscious of the being of the Maudsleys of Domesday Book,—and the brotherhood of St. Bernard, and the ploughs of Hofwyl, had laboured diligently in their vocation, whether Doncaster races came to Mrs. Armytage of Holywell,—or Mrs. Armytage of Holywell went to Doncaster races! The sparrow on the housetop seemed of more account than herself, to those among whom its nest was appointed.

At length, the aggravation of uneradicable disease gave evidence that the anguish and peril she had undergone, had been borne in vain. Once more the latent disorder put forth its agonizing throes. She could travel no further: she sought a home—a home in which to suffer—in which to die! It was by the side of the Arno she set up her rest—that poetically-sounding river, which seems to breathe of shepherds, muses, and zephyrs; but where the rain rains so heavily, and the spring breezes blow so bleakly. Her villa, bare and comfortless, like all Italian villas, was ill calcu-

lated for the chilly season in which she chose it for her habitation. She had no servants but foreign servants—no books but foreign books: she had not so much as foreign companions—foreign friends—for these she rejected. A miserably disease was devouring her!—Yet, with all this, she was only subjected to the common lot of humanity—the visitations with which, for his own great purposes, GOD is pleased to visit the creatures of his hand. The peculiar humiliation lay in herself: that heretofore she had presumed to hold herself exempted from the vulgar destiny of mankind.

And now, "by foreign hands," her dying limbs "must be composed;" strangers must stand impatient by her bed-side; her very dust must return to the dust of strange and, as *she* deemed it, unhallowed ground. The adored Caroline of the old Squire and the fond Arthur—the revered mistress of Hardywood and Simmons—the patroness of schools and almshouses—the benefactress of hospitals and

asylums—the great Mrs. Armytage of Holywell Park—must lie unnoticed and forgotten in the weedy corner of a Tuscan burying-ground! for behold! Providence had blessed her with two children to fulfil the customary duty of mourning over the grave of their mother:—the one had been dismissed from her affection by the mandate of her imperious temper—the other cut off, in the prime of youth and loveliness, by her perversity!

Had not the sufferer cause for mourning?—Had she not cause for despondency?—Might it not be inferred—might it not be hoped—that the tears which now, for the first time, began to steal down her cheeks, were tears of repentance—of penitence? For lo! *She was about to die, and felt that she had lived in vain!*

The servants who attended her, weary of their monotonous life, were constantly protesting that nothing ailed her but *ennui*—that she ought to remove into Florence for advice, if not for amusement. But Mrs. Armytage

persisted in refusing to move: she knew that, amid the stir and tumult of a city—amid the throng of unknown faces—she should feel still more desolately alone. Even the peasants, who occasionally found themselves in her presence while serving the villa with the produce of their farms or gardens, ventured to accost her with the expression of their wonder and pity that she should lead so solitary a life; and the children, with an inquiry, whether in her own country she had neither friends nor relatives?—For conventional distinctions are otherwise kept up on the Continent than in our own aristocratic frame of society; and man meets man as if the same heaven shone over the heads—the same earth sustained the steps of one and all; and little Josephine the milk-maid could discern no thunderbolts in the hand of the once puissant Mrs. Armytage, in whose presence the two thousand heads and knees of the tenants of Holywell had been wont to bow down and worship.

Often would the miserable woman sit in her

ill-closed window, watching the still desolate valley of the Arno, and wondering when the trees would bud, and the verdure spring anew; "for then," she thought, "I shall be at rest!" Dreary as was the scene, it was more cheering to her feelings than the presence of strange multitudes;—she had more sympathy with the trees and pastures than with uncleanly bigots, who knew not her language; and the song of birds and bleating of flocks seemed congenial to the ear that listened in vain for the sound of a familiar voice—for a word of kindness and endearment! But she had learned at length to say, when contemplating the greatness of her punishment—"I have deserved it all!" The right spirit was dawning within her;—even Dr. Grant might have rejoiced, with tears, over his patroness, as over the one sinner that repenteth!

One evening, after having pursued for hours her dreary meditations, by the light of the melancholy tapers that scarcely served to define the dimensions of her vast saloon, Mrs.

Armytage was preparing to retire to the feverish pillow, which pain rendered a pillow of thorns, when she was startled by a sudden tumult in the portico of the villa; and the insinuations of the neighbouring farmers, that her solitary abode would one night or other be attacked by one of the "bands" roving about the country, suddenly rushed into her mind. The clamour and altercation in the vestibule increased; till at length, starting from her chair, she stood with a beating heart to abide the issue. "After all, then," murmured she, "I am reserved for a violent death!—With a mortal disease consuming me, I must fall a victim to assassination!" And she shuddered at the thought of all she might still be called upon to bear, ere laid at rest for ever,—when the door of her chamber was flung open: she beheld dark figures enter the room; and involuntarily closed her eyes, that she might meet her doom without shrinking.

With hasty steps, the intruders traversed the floor, and approached her; while, over-

come by weakness, she sank into a chair under the expectation of an assailing arm—perhaps a mortal blow! A single humble and heart-felt ejaculation to Heaven avowed her apprehensions and her resignation.

But the arm that encircled her was no hostile arm—the sobs that reached her ear burst from no alien bosom. It was her son—her afflicted son—who was hanging over her! It was Marian who was kneeling at her feet!

"Will you receive us?—Will you accept us?"—faltered Arthur, again embracing her.

A kiss imprinted upon his clasped hands, and the burning tears that fell upon them, silently avouched the repentance and the renewed affections of his mother!

CHAPTER XXIII.

O terror! what hath she perceived? O Joy!
What doth she look on? Whom doth she behold?

WORDSWORTH.

IT was with some difficulty that Mrs. Armytage could persuade herself, as she sat at breakfast between her two children, the following morning, that all this happiness was not a dream; that they had really quitted their cheerful home,—their friendly neighbourhood,—their beautiful children,—to minister to her comfort. The mystery of the sudden arrival was readily explained. An English surgeon, summoned from Florence to attend her in a painful crisis of her disorder, had accidentally related her melancholy and precarious situation to the Ambassador, to whose household he was attached; who, being a kind-hearted and con-

scientious man, had judged it right to communicate to Lord Armytage, with whom he was intimately acquainted, the lamentable position of his kinswoman.

The result may easily be inferred. From Lord Armytage the sad intelligence went straight to Arthur; and a few hours' consideration sufficed to determine his wife to quit all for his sake, and accompany him on his pilgrimage of duty to Italy. They took with them the most eminent surgical practitioner whom money would induce to quit England on such an errand; scarcely slept on their road; and reached Florence, almost in reply to the letter of Lord B.

Even flushed as it was by pleasurable emotions, Arthur could scarcely refrain from tears as he gazed upon the altered countenance of his mother. He had not supposed that disease could work such a change on any living frame. Her dark hair was now silvered to a snowy whiteness; deep furrows seamed her cheeks; her eyes had attained a ghastly and unnatural

expression; twenty years appeared to have passed over her head! He could no longer doubt that she had reached the last stage of mortal existence.

"I see you are afraid to talk to me of Holywell," said she to her son, in her now mild and enfeebled voice, after having exhausted her inquiries touching their common friends, common county, common country. "But do not spare me. I must not be humoured as I used to be of old. Nay, romantic as you may consider the project, it is my intention to accompany you home,—to die where my father died,—and be buried where my husband and my child are buried. I know, though you are too kind to tell it me, that the leave of absence you have obtained from your parliamentary duties, on whatever pretext, can be but short. We must not part again, my son! and if the adviser you have brought me will assure us that at least I shall not distress you by dying on the road," (a melancholy smile broke over

her features as she spoke,) "the sooner we set out for England, the better."

"Do you think you shall be able to support the fatigue of such a journey?" faltered Arthur.

"Do you think you will be able to bear the ordeal of a return to Holywell?" added Marian, in a still lower voice.

"Till I have surmounted *that* trial," replied Mrs. Armytage, more gravely, "I have done nothing! I know that it is good for me to have been afflicted; but my chastisements have been death from above; a *voluntary* expiation is still owing. I must do penance for my former faults. I must make it seen of men, as I feel it in my heart of hearts, that my pride is humbled to the dust. Do not interrupt me; I need no soothing of the soul, again to mislead me into error. Let me bear my cross in all patience and humility; and let it be my reward that my eyes are closed by the hands of those I love, and that I shall not moulder into nothingness in unkindred dust."

Nor could Mrs. Armytage be said to swerve a single moment from her regenerated frame of spirit. Amid her most grievous pangs, she never murmured; amid all the contrarieties of her homeward journey, she uttered not a single cry of impatience. She was now as fortified in good as once in evil. The idea of beholding her grandchildren was very cheering to her; and, as they drew near England, and at length, near Holywell, not even Marian was more excited by the prospect of their family re-union than the dying woman. "Do not suspect me without reason," said she to Arthur, when, for an instant, he ventured to jest with her on her grandmotherly tenderness: "it is *not* the heir of Holywell Park, on whom I am anxious to bestow my blessing before I die. It is on little Arthur—the son of Arthur—the grandson of my own Arthur." And her son was silenced in a moment.

Marian, however, when they drew near, *very* near home,—the scene of all her former disagreements with her mother-in-law—began to

tremble as she called to mind every little alteration effected since her departure; every innovation, every change; a room new furnished—a parterre introduced—a plantation cleared away; she knew that Mrs. Armytage professed the opinion of Pope who "could not bear that a post should be grubbed up which he remembered in his boyhood:" and an old tree or two which had been felled for the benefit of the prospect, now rose up in judgment before her! But these apprehensions were soon relieved by the presence of mind of Mrs. Armytage.

"I have prepared myself to find many changes which must have appeared essential to a taste less bigoted than my own," said she, as they approached Thoroton. "But remember that no transformation I can find at Holywell is half so strange or so complete, as that which has taken place within my own mind."

She herself, however, had scarcely calculated upon the effect likely to be produced on her feelings, by the first aspect of her former

residence. It was night when they arrived; for Arthur had so timed the journey, in order to spare her the view of Holywell church, with all its sad associations, as well as to avoid the inquisitive glances of the villagers; and Marian accompanied her at once to her own room—her own former room—in which not the slightest change had been effected since her departure: even a few personal trifles which she had left lying about, had been religiously retained in their places!

"May Heaven bless you, my daughter!" was the solemn ejaculation of Mrs. Armytage, overcome with pain, fatigue, and emotion, on finding that her ancient attendants had been sent for, and their services secured to her. "This one night, and to-morrow, I would fain give to solitude and reflection. Leave me alone with myself and God!—On the day following, I will see your babes; afterwards my excellent friend, Dr. Grant,—the Rotherhams,—the Maranhams, — whom you will.

To-morrow, my dear Marian, I must be alone!"

On emerging from the retreat thus allotted to herself, all trace of agitation was effaced,—all emotion subdued:—Mrs. Armytage had wrestled with the evil spirit for the last time, and been triumphant. Thenceforward her demeanor was mild,—her voice equable,—save when the anguish of disease depressed it to a faltering whisper. Dr. Grant came; and, though tears rolled silently down his cheeks on marking the cruel change which pain and sorrow had wrought in the appearance of his early patroness, his heart soon glowed with satisfaction on perceiving that the good seed which the Almighty had sowed in that steril earth, was at length bringing forth fruit; that, as it approached towards eternity, a brighter light had descended upon her soul. Never had he loved or reverenced her half so much, when in former days she dealt forth benefits to him and his, as now, when, fallen in fortunes and

dispirited by disease, she rose superior to her destinies, sustained by reliance on the infinite goodness of GOD.

For days,—for weeks,—for months,—she lingered, struggling with torment,—struggling with the tenacity of life, which even torment fails to extinguish. Arthur, compelled to leave her for a time, in order to fulfil his duties in Parliament, found her yet alive on his return at the close of the session; thanking Heaven that she was permitted to hold him once more in her arms before she departed hence to be no more seen. Fain would she have prevented her daughter-in-law, from persisting in an attendance upon her sick room, which now presented a fearful and revolting spectacle. But Marian would not be denied. As well might Naomi have rejected the tender services of Ruth, as Mrs. Armytage those of the faithful wife of her son.

"And this is the daughter whom I presumed to despise, whom I presumed to reject!" mur-

mured she to Dr. Grant, when Marian, kneeling at her feet, was serving her with almost menial humility; then, laying her hand solemnly upon the young fair head that concealed itself in the folds of her robe, on hearing this tender adjuration, she bestowed a heartfelt benediction on her angelic attendant. "Who would have done for me what *she* has done?" persisted Mrs. Armytage, in a broken voice. "*Who* would have forgiven me, *who* would have comforted me, who would have smoothed my pathway to the grave? Doctor! I commend to your love and care this second Sophia; more happy than the first, to have escaped the evil influence of my jealous pride. Love her, my dear friend, as I do; and value her as she deserves to be valued."

In these happy dispositions, her last days, her last breath, passed away. Fearful were her sufferings. Her best friends scarcely desired the prorogation of her miserable existence; and, when all was over, they could rejoice with

exceeding joy, that she had expired in so peaceful a frame of mind,—in charity with all men, and all men in charity with *her*!

* * * * *

But the remembrance of every painful scene connected with these events, has now in a great measure subsided at Holywell. There is not a happier pair or happier parents in the county of York, than Arthur Armytage and his wife; the Wildinghams and Wetherbys are frequently their hosts, frequently their guests; Rainsford, in some degree reconciled to his lot, has brought his pretty wife to profit by their example; and the Rotherham family have lately noticed with satisfaction that Lord Greta appears to be attaching himself to Mary Grant, whose worthy father, thanks to Lord Armytage, is now a very venerable—and *truly* a very venerable—Archdeacon. The Duchess of Wetherby rejoices in the prospect of having the favourite pupil of Sophia Armytage for a sister-in-law; and there is luckily not even a Mr. Wemmersley in the neighbour-

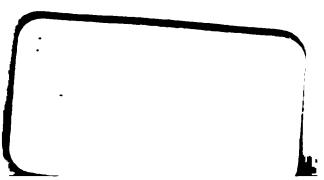
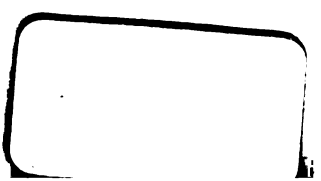
hood of Thereton to cavil at the disparity of the connexion.

Margaret Maranham, mild and retiring as ever, but improved in health and spirits, resides in a cheerful cottage adjoining the grounds of Wildingham Abbey, where Rosamond's lovely children are her daily visitors. Their Duchess-grandmother has neither time nor attention to bestow on them; her leisure being engrossed with expatiating on the folly of Lady Amabel, who, having eloped last year with Lord Edward Brereton, has just now the happiness of sharing his barrack-room in the Regent's Park; and the madness of Lady Honoria, who has declared to her family an intention of bestowing herself upon a converted converter of the Jews, in order to go pilgrimising with him into the Holy Land. The scandalous chronicle asserts, moreover, that (Mr. Quin having died suddenly at Paris, where Lord Downham happened to be passing the Easter vacation,) Lady Arabella has made good certain former

claims upon his Lordship's hand and Marquisate. But the rumour wants confirmation.

Sir Leon Marscourt, meanwhile, in order to distinguish himself from all possible Marscourts, has been impowered by the Herald's Office to add the prefix of Fitz to his new name; and Sir Leon and the Hon. Lady Fitz-Marscourt of Counterfield Lodge, are entertaining Highnesses Royal and Serene, Landgraves and Margravines, Comtes and Chevaliers, at their princely mansion in Belgrave Square,—all "tarnation grand."

But it is a happy *home*-circle that graces the hospitality of Holywell! The Baltimores and Robseys esteem it the Eden of the United Kingdom; the rich applaud its sayings and doings; the poor throng in cheerful confidence to its gates; all uniting to bless the now-popular name of Mrs. Armytage

THE END.

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